

Complete Psychological Topics

Ben Huot

December 4, 2010

Contents

| | | |
|----------|---|-----------|
| 1 | First Things | 9 |
| 1.1 | Logo | 10 |
| 1.2 | For More Information | 10 |
| 1.3 | Cover Graphic | 11 |
| 1.4 | License | 11 |
| 1.5 | Introduction | 12 |
| 1.5.1 | Background of the Book | 12 |
| 1.5.2 | Summary | 13 |
| 1.5.3 | Experience of Schizophrenia | 13 |
| 1.5.4 | Is My Situation Typical? | 14 |
| 2 | Disabled Veteran | 19 |
| 2.1 | Becoming a Soldier | 20 |
| 2.1.1 | Non Exclusive Patriotism | 20 |
| 2.1.2 | Letters from Basic Training | 21 |
| 2.1.3 | Military Poetry | 43 |
| 2.1.4 | Considering Military Service? | 62 |
| 2.2 | Transition | 65 |
| 2.2.1 | College | 65 |
| 2.2.2 | Journey | 70 |
| 2.3 | Having Schizophrenia | 76 |
| 2.3.1 | Introduction | 76 |
| 2.3.2 | Breakdown | 79 |
| 2.3.3 | Limitations | 87 |
| 2.3.4 | Religion | 93 |
| 2.3.5 | Counseling | 96 |

| | | |
|----------|--|------------|
| 3 | Book of Psychology | 107 |
| 3.1 | Personal Psychological Issues | 108 |
| 3.1.1 | My Biggest Flaws | 108 |
| 3.1.2 | How the Army Changed Me | 108 |
| 3.1.3 | Why I Never Gave Up | 112 |
| 3.1.4 | Ways in Which My Thinking is Chinese | 114 |
| 3.1.5 | Why So Rational? | 116 |
| 3.2 | Discover My Life Story | 118 |
| 3.2.1 | Childhood | 118 |
| 3.2.2 | High School | 119 |
| 3.2.3 | Army | 119 |
| 3.2.4 | College | 121 |
| 3.2.5 | Schizophrenia | 121 |
| 3.3 | Discover My Disability | 122 |
| 3.3.1 | Background Information | 122 |
| 3.3.2 | Dealing with the Illness | 123 |
| 3.3.3 | Living with the Situation | 124 |
| 3.3.4 | My Situation | 125 |
| 3.4 | Mental Illness | 126 |
| 3.4.1 | The Schizophrenia Split | 126 |
| 3.4.2 | Symptoms of Schizophrenia | 127 |
| 3.4.3 | Fear is Not Fun | 128 |
| 3.4.4 | Extreme Anxiety | 130 |
| 3.4.5 | Separate and Not Equal | 131 |
| 3.5 | General Psychological Issues | 133 |
| 3.5.1 | The Corruption of Individuality | 133 |
| 3.5.2 | Reasons to Relax | 135 |
| 3.6 | Me and My Writing | 136 |
| 3.6.1 | Why So Serious? | 136 |
| 3.6.2 | My Style | 139 |
| 3.6.3 | Research Issues | 141 |
| 3.6.4 | Artistic Approach | 145 |
| 3.7 | Letters from Family | 148 |
| 3.7.1 | Dated | 148 |
| 3.7.2 | Undated | 153 |
| 4 | Depression, Stress, and Schizophrenia | 159 |
| 4.1 | Causes of Depression | 160 |
| 4.1.1 | Schizophrenia | 160 |
| 4.1.2 | Determining the Cause | 160 |
| 4.1.3 | Stress | 160 |

| | | |
|----------|--|------------|
| 4.1.4 | Keeping Balance | 161 |
| 4.2 | Solving Thinking Problems | 161 |
| 4.2.1 | Accepting Your Limitations | 161 |
| 4.2.2 | Self Reflection | 162 |
| 4.2.3 | Compartmentalization | 163 |
| 4.3 | Work Issues | 165 |
| 4.3.1 | Keeping Busy | 165 |
| 4.3.2 | New Skills and Major Changes | 166 |
| 4.4 | Dealing with Others | 167 |
| 4.4.1 | Get Out Daily | 167 |
| 4.4.2 | Over Stimulation | 167 |
| 4.4.3 | Social Challenges | 169 |
| 4.5 | Rest and Recovery | 170 |
| 4.5.1 | Getting Enough Sleep | 170 |
| 4.5.2 | Relaxation | 170 |
| 4.5.3 | Contact with Animals | 171 |
| 5 | Positive News about Myself | 173 |
| 5.1 | The Cause of My Epiphany | 174 |
| 5.1.1 | The Books | 174 |
| 5.1.2 | My Problems | 175 |
| 5.2 | My Life | 177 |
| 5.2.1 | Where I am Now | 177 |
| 5.2.2 | What I have Learned | 177 |
| 5.3 | My Core Problem | 179 |
| 5.3.1 | Exploring the Problem | 179 |
| 5.3.2 | Finding Possible Solutions | 180 |
| 5.3.3 | Reasons and Motivations | 182 |
| 5.4 | Being Without Doing | 188 |
| 5.4.1 | The Solution | 188 |
| 5.4.2 | Spiritual Laws | 189 |
| 5.4.3 | Real Freedom | 190 |
| 5.5 | True Humility | 191 |
| 5.5.1 | God's Perspective | 191 |
| 5.5.2 | Living a Happier Life | 192 |
| 5.6 | Problems with Theories | 194 |
| 5.6.1 | Background | 194 |
| 5.6.2 | My Theory on Theories | 194 |
| 5.6.3 | The Biblical Approach | 196 |
| 5.7 | Being Realistic | 198 |
| 5.7.1 | Working with People | 198 |

| | | |
|----------|--------------------------------------|------------|
| 5.7.2 | Anxiety for No Good Reason | 200 |
| 6 | How to Respond Positively | 205 |
| 6.1 | Stop Getting Mad | 206 |
| 6.1.1 | Why They Hate America | 206 |
| 6.1.2 | Lose-Lose Situation | 207 |
| 6.1.3 | Money is Power | 207 |
| 6.1.4 | Recognizing the Problem | 208 |
| 6.1.5 | The Solution | 209 |
| 6.2 | Everything is Useful | 210 |
| 6.2.1 | For Individuals | 210 |
| 6.2.2 | For Society | 211 |
| 6.2.3 | What You Can Do | 213 |
| 6.3 | Affecting Change | 214 |
| 6.3.1 | Learning Helpful Concepts | 214 |
| 6.3.2 | Starting with Ourselves | 215 |
| 6.4 | Learning to Say No | 216 |
| 6.4.1 | Total Situations | 216 |
| 6.4.2 | Limits | 217 |
| 6.4.3 | Humility Requires Weakness | 218 |
| 6.5 | Little Things Matter | 219 |
| 6.5.1 | We Worry Too Much | 219 |
| 6.5.2 | Assault on Christianity | 220 |
| 6.5.3 | Spiritual Battle | 222 |
| 7 | More Insights and Inspiration | 225 |
| 7.1 | Dealing with Self Esteem | 226 |
| 7.1.1 | The Military | 226 |
| 7.1.2 | Coping with Stress | 227 |
| 7.2 | Dealing with My Illness | 229 |
| 7.2.1 | Power Issues | 229 |
| 7.2.2 | Breakdown of Trust | 230 |
| 7.2.3 | Other People's Problems | 232 |
| 7.3 | Going Forward | 234 |
| 7.3.1 | My Decisions | 234 |
| 7.3.2 | Who I am | 234 |
| 7.3.3 | Building Relationships | 236 |
| 7.4 | Artistic Freedom | 239 |
| 7.4.1 | Emotions | 239 |
| 7.4.2 | New Developments | 240 |
| 7.4.3 | Sources of Strength | 241 |

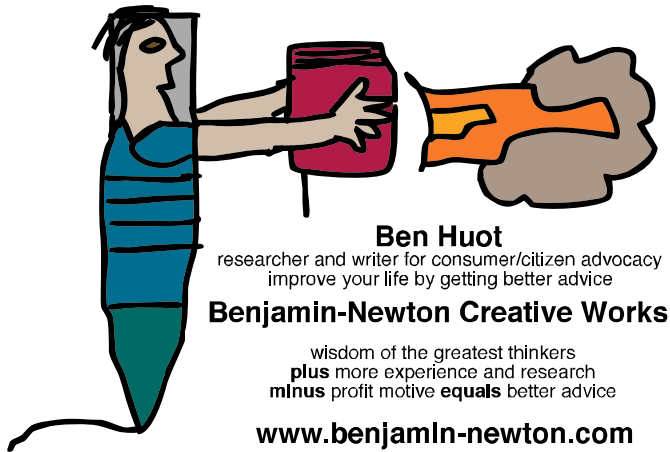
| | | |
|----------|----------------------------------|------------|
| 8 | Final Insights | 245 |
| 8.1 | Too Literal | 246 |
| 8.1.1 | Background | 246 |
| 8.1.2 | How it Works | 247 |
| 8.2 | My Motivation | 248 |
| 8.2.1 | The Military Factor | 248 |
| 8.2.2 | Making Sense of It All | 249 |
| 8.3 | Big Changes | 251 |
| 8.3.1 | Kinds of Change | 251 |
| 8.3.2 | Avoiding Stress | 252 |
| 8.4 | New Projects | 252 |
| 8.4.1 | Rationale | 252 |
| 8.4.2 | Goals | 253 |

Chapter 1

First Things

by Ben Huot

1.1 Logo



1.2 For More Information

For more books and information, visit me on the web at
<http://benjamin-newton.com/>

Feel free to send me e-mail regarding the books and website at <mailto:ben@benjamin-newton.com> I even enjoy constructive criticism

1.3 Cover Graphic



1.4 License

This entire PDF is licensed together under a Creative Commons Attribution-No Derivative Works 3.0 United States License as a whole, and nothing is to be separated, added on to, or modified in any manner.

Clarification on what no derivatives means:

No changes may be made in any way including but not limited to:

the material content and design must be copied as a whole (everything contained in this pdf file)

- with nothing added
- without anything taken away

must be kept in its original form with no additions or subtractions to

- file formats
- HTML and CSS code
- PDF files
- graphics and movies
- sounds, music, and spoken word
- interactivity and flash
- file and directory structure
- filenames and directory names
- links
- distribution method

1.5 Introduction

1.5.1 Background of the Book

This book provides psychological information I have learned in dealing with the unique stresses and challenges of: being a soldier, later as a person with Schizophrenia (for 10 years after my diagnosis), and all along as a highly sensitive and intelligent individual. What makes it original is my: research, experiences, my personality, my family, and where I grew up. I grew up in a working class town, next to a college town, in one of the safest and most beautiful part of America, that no one has heard of. I planned on becoming an International Businessman. Things changed a lot, after I joined the military and I became very serious and also became mentally ill. I decided to study Asian religion, literature, philosophy, history, and art for the next 11.5 years and wrote a number of books, in the process.

I am: a disabled veteran, a person with Schizophrenia, a Christian, a scholar, a philosopher, a poet, a mystic, a student of history, a futurist, an artist, and a designer. I am: very intelligent, very serious, very creative, highly sensitive, a fiscal liberal (politically), a very good writer,

very direct, very clear and concise, and very independent. I am most influenced by: Soren Kierkegaard, the Apostle Paul, the Prophets of the Bible, Chuang Tzu, and the global and historical church, especially in Asia and Africa. I am very close to my nuclear family and they have been essential in helping me become who I am today. I enjoy studying about different cultures and different ideas. I enjoy nature and animals.

I am very concerned with the direction the world is headed. I think the most major problems today are: the global climate change, running out of resources (not just oil), general lack of interest in education, laziness, and ignorance about everything. Worst of all, neither the people or the government seems to take any of these issues seriously. My entire writings are based on paradox – the most important of is what the average person needs to change about themselves and what I and people like me need to change about ourselves.

1.5.2 Summary

This collection, Complete Psychological Topics, contains most of my writings on the topic of psychology, including: my experiences in the military, my mental illness, and other psychological topics. This book contains Disabled Veteran and the Book of Psychology.

1.5.3 Experience of Schizophrenia

Many people may wonder why I write about Schizophrenia and what I have to offer that a psychiatrist does not bring to the table. It is true that I am not an expert in Schizophrenia and if you want to learn about this disease, I am definitely not the only source you should consult. What I do bring to the table which is very unusual is my ability to write well, my intelligence, and my experience dealing with Schizophrenia.

The problem with an expert in Schizophrenia, like a psychiatrist that specializes in mental illness, is that they are an expert in theory, but have never directly experienced what they have learned about. Certain things

are hard to understand by research alone. Just like people who study the military, but have never been a service member, will never really understand what the military is all about, so a psychiatrist, no matter what their training, is no match to one who suffers with a mental illness.

A good example of the difference between what I offer in my writings and what a psychiatrist might bring is to compare a research paper on the Gospels compared to the writings of the Apostle Paul. God could have made the Bible very short and simple and explained everything very analytically, so that everything was explained, that people debate about, and have everything wrap up very neatly. But the Bible actually brings up all sorts of things, that are not easily explained and opens up a can of worms, which theologians have been trying to put into a neat package for centuries, but has eluded everyone.

The Bible is written by people, who actually experienced God, in difficult lives. Paul was not just a religious scholar, but was a missionary and suffered all sorts of imprisonments and opposition. He got into the very difficult situations, where he risked his life and reputation, for what he believed. He was not in a comfortable room and imagining solutions to theological problems, but rather suffered for what he believed. This is the reason why people care about what he wrote many centuries later.

1.5.4 Is My Situation Typical?

Most people who have Schizophrenia fall into 3 groups: 1/3 of people with Schizophrenia stare at the wall all day, 1/3 live their lives in various levels of assisted living, and the final 1/3 live mostly independently. We call this last group high functioning and I am at the very extreme of this category. So, no, my situation is not typical.

In fact, the last time I visited my latest psychiatrist, from the VA, he questioned whether or not I fit so neatly into the Paranoid Schizophrenia label, even though that is what my symptom show, because I am doing unbelievably well, for having this mental illness. He said that people with Paranoid Schizophrenia go back to the hospital, after they are diagnosed, because they have relapses

(which I have had none) and don't achieve results, like self-publishing books. Philosophy, along with other types of abstract thought, are considered not possible to be understood, by people with Schizophrenia.

On the other hand, what I have done becomes more possible, if you are able to be in a situation where: you are very intelligent and creative, highly motivated, you keep taking your medicine, your medicine is effective (especially with the newer medicines – ones developed after 1990), you get on government services right away, you have good family support, and you have not taken drugs, abused alcohol, or committed crimes (anytime in your life). The most important thing you can do is to take your medicine, as it is prescribed. If you cannot do that, than the other things are not going to matter.

One of the side effects of the disease is that it is almost impossible, to work full time or in stressful job, so family support and government and community run services are necessary, to be able to afford, to live inside, off the streets. One of the most important things your family can do for you is to fill out the required paperwork, for you to get the various government and community run services, that are necessary to live in a good situation, with Schizophrenia. If you do not want to be locked up, the best way to insure this won't happen is to not commit crimes.

There is no cure for Schizophrenia and the medicines never take away all the symptoms. For the remaining problems, behavioral strategies are often the best, as well as controlling your inputs (TV, Internet, book usage). Religion can be an important part of these kind of strategies. You can also benefit from counseling. But remember that these are all secondary treatments, to be done, in addition to taking the medicine. There is no way to treat Schizophrenia with any kind of traditional medicine and we will likely be able to travel through time and to other earth like planets, before we can find a cure, for Schizophrenia.

The biggest side effects of the medicines, used to treat people with Schizophrenia, are lack of energy and weight gain. These are some of the hardest things to deal

with, as a person with Schizophrenia. The lack of energy makes it hard, to get out and do things and the weight gain makes everything harder and increases the chances of: heart disease, diabetes, and other related health problems.

Chapter 2

Disabled Veteran

by Ben Huot

2.1 Becoming a Soldier

2.1.1 Non Exclusive Patriotism

I voluntarily served my country and am permanently disabled because of my service. This is why I am receiving funds from the Veterans Administration. I am a disabled veteran. I served my country, because it is a beautiful country and it is my country.

Many people see America as being an offshoot of England and based on the Enlightenment and that our closest allies are England and France. They see American history and culture as that of rich white men, as taught in history books and the mass media, that is accepted by the mainstream of opinion leaders. The mass media, called popular culture, is all over the world and is developed by a couple of rich white men, who don't even pay taxes in the United States. These multinational corporations have nothing to do with America.

I see America as reflected, by the people who live here, currently and I see America as an immigrant nation, except for the Native Americans. The only thing that is exclusively American is Native American culture. When I study about the culture of historic and ancient Asia, this is as American as studying about the the American Revolution, the American Civil War, or World War II. I think that people, who got into America legally, from any other nation and follow the laws are just as much American as people who came over on the Mayflower who follow the laws. Not just those who sell out their culture for popular culture, but keeping their customs, from the countries they came from are just as American.

The really unique thing about America as I have, come to realize, after my service in the military is that we have a goal of toleration for people of different backgrounds and especially of other religions. That is one of the major things I seek to further, in my writings and artwork. This is often referred to as multiculturalism. I don't see why we need to put up artificial boundaries between us and other countries around the world. We can be seen

as doing the right thing, as well as they can be, even if we order our society in different ways, or that they may appear farther ahead than us in some areas doesn't make us less of a nation. We don't need to think of ourselves, as the best nation on earth. We are one, among a number of great nations, and we don't need to be culturally exclusive to prove it.

2.1.2 Letters from Basic Training

Terms Defined

Air Assault: school where you learn to repel out of helicopters as a way of delivering soldiers into combat. It is like Airborne but with helicopters instead of airplanes.

AIT - Advanced Individual Training. This is the training in your job you signed up for when you joined the Army. You often go to another base right after graduating Basic Training and the training can be anytime from 4 weeks to a year, depending on the job. You get more and more freedom as time passes and you pass tests successfully. Drill Sergeants are here as well.

Article 15: You can get an Article 15 for almost anything from having food in your locker, smoking, or violating almost any minor rule. You can get them for just not doing something correctly too many times. The punishment is that you are fined about \$150 out of your \$600 for the whole month and you have to do 2 hours extra duty every day for 2 weeks. Meaning, you will only get a maximum of 5 hours sleep a night.

Basic Training: This is the initial training in the Army which trains you to be an infantry soldier. Every soldier must complete this training first, as we are considered first and foremost infantry soldiers and the Army wants the option of using any soldier in the infantry, if they feel they need to. There are 3 things you need to do to graduate: go through the gas chamber (unless you are on KP that day), qualify at BRM, and throw a live grenade. Basic Training is almost exactly 8 weeks long.

Battle Buddy: another soldier in training you are assigned to to work with for the entire training. It can

also refer to any one in your platoon.

Bivouac: Army version of camping

Bolo: when you don't qualify at the BRM qualifications the first time.

BRM - Basic Rifle Marksmanship. You learn to shoot your M-16, also referred to as rifle or weapon, but never as a gun. The point of the rifle is to be very accurate a kill someone with just one bullet. This rifle didn't even have fully automatic mode with the model we were using. This training lasts about 2 weeks. You qualify at the end by shooting enough targets that are silhouettes of other soldiers and they are up for only 3 seconds and they pop up and down at one of 3 different lengths away - one is at 50 meters, one is at 200 meters, and the other one is at 300 meters. You have to shoot in a foxhole and laying on your stomach (in the **prone**)

Cadence: singing while marching, The songs follow at the same time as you move your feet.

Chow Hall: where you eat

Claymore Mine: This is a directional mine that shoots out shrapnel when activated. It has to be unpacked and set up. You test it first, to make sure it is not defective. It is used to protect foxholes from attack. The shrapnel should all go forward towards the enemy if you point it in the correct direction.

CO - Commanding Officer: this is generally the officer (a Captain in rank) at the head of your company. He or she signs off on most paperwork as is the one ultimately responsible for anything anyone does in their unit.

Counseling Session: If you are not doing something correctly, then the Drill Sergeant gives you a counseling session which can be deducted from your sleep time. They tell you what you did wrong and often give you extra time to practice it which is taken out of sleep or free time. You can get these for not shining your boots properly, not ironing your clothes properly, or not marching properly. If you get more than a few of these, you get an Article 15.

Cycle: this refers to the particular interval in which you have completed Basic Training.

Drill Cadet: a cadet is an officer in training, but these ones were called Drill Cadets because they were

working with the Drill Sergeants

DS - Drill Sergeant. The basic unit during Basic Training is the **platoon** and it is headed by 2 to 3 Staff Sergeant or Sergeant First Classes in rank and will be a mixed combination of races and genders. They are each a Non-Commissioned Officer which you have to follow every command they give. You finish every thing you say to a Drill Sergeant with **Drill Sergeant**. If you don't, then you are "**dropped**" and required to do 20 push-ups and this number increases as you progress through Basic Training.

E-3, E-4, etc. This is the pay grade of an enlisted soldier and is used to identify what rank someone is no matter what the name for the rank across different services. You start out between an E-1 (Private) to an E-4 (Specialist), depending on how much college you have or how many people you have got to enlist.

Fighting Position: this can refer to a foxhole or another type of protected fighting position.

Fireguard: Every one does a shift of watching for fire, so there is someone watching the entire time everyone is asleep. You do this as in every thing else in groups of two.

Formation: when your entire unit is standing out in line

Fragmentation Grenade: This is what most people refer to as a grenade - it shoots out shrapnel, a few seconds after you pull the pin. It has a very high angle of fire, so you are generally safe if you are laying down or in your foxhole.

FTX - Field Training Exercises : where you train for combat with all the equipment and in simulated battle by role-playing. It is the equivalent of a dress rehearsal for combat.

Gas Chamber: This is a small cabin you are taken into about half way through Basic Training. A stick of slowly releasing gas called CS which is from 10-100 times stronger than tear gas is placed inside. The Drill Sergeants are standing in there in full protective gear (MOPP4). You go in with your mask on, take it off and stand there. There are Drill Sergeants blocking both the doors on the

outside. If you say anything or try to leave early, you are thrown back in for a longer period of time. You will start BRM shortly afterwards.

Go/No-Go: you either pass most tests in the Army and get a "go" or you fail and get a "no-go"

Hurry up and Wait: tendency of military to get you all ready for something a long time before they are ready to use you

KP - Kitchen Patrol: You get assigned KP every so many days. When you get this job, you go with another member of your platoon, you wake up before everyone else, and go in and help the cooks who are all civilians all day long. The Drill Sergeants smoke you if anyone does something wrong. You should be woken up by the fire guards.

Leave: time off from the military

LES - Leave and Earnings Statement: this is your paycheck and it also tells how much vacation you have accumulated.

Low Crawl and High Crawl: The low crawl is where you lay flat on your stomach and push forward with your helmet and your arm. The high crawl is where you crawl on your knees and elbows. The point of keeping low is that we are trained to hit and kill a soldier in 3-5 seconds of even seeing their helmet. It is no secret that American soldiers are poorer shots than most our enemies. So if we can hit them in that time, they definitely can hit us. The only way to protect against machine gun fire is by being as low as possible.

Montgomery GI Bill: a law passed by congress where you get money for college after serving in the military

Manual of Arms: This is where you learn to march with the rifle in ceremony and to move it safely while loaded in formation

MOS - Military Occupational Specialty. This is the job you signed up for when you first go to your regional MEPS. You are guaranteed this job as long as you pass the school. Since you get your first choice of available jobs, if and when you fail the school, the Army re-assigns you to their first choice, which is usually something in the combat arms like Tanker or Air Defense Ar-

tillery.

MREs - Meals Ready to Eat: pre-packaged and partially de-hydrated meals that don't have to be cooked by cooks, but taste better, and are more expensive.

NBC - Nuclear Biological and Chemical: You wear a protective suit and a protective mask to protect you from poisonous chemical gases, nuclear radiation, and biological germ attack. It is called a pro mask or protective mask and never gas mask, because a gas mask would give you gas, not protect from it.

Personal Hygiene: brushing teeth, shaving, showering, etc.

Phases: You go through Red Phase, Blue Phase, and White Phases in the Army Basic Training. As you complete a phase, you get more privileges and you move up phases by passing your PT tests and learning basic combat survival skills.

Protestant: other - This is what was printed on my dog tags. The Army has several major groupings for religion - Protestant and Catholic, so there are always a Protestant minister and a Catholic priest for each unit. There might be others as well, but these were the only I knew of.

PT - Physical Training. Exercise. PT tests involve a 2-mile run, followed by 2 minutes of sit-ups, and 2 minutes of push-ups. You have to meet a certain standard or you have to do extra PT and can get other penalties as well.

PX - Post Exchange. This is like a drug store or other general store without groceries. These are stores on Army bases. You have to be in the military to go to them.

Range: where you practice shooting your rifle or other weapon

Ranger School: elite training where you learn how to take command posts in front of the regular Army. It is very difficult but not as advanced as the Green Berets.

Reception Battalion: This is where you arrive first after you leave the regional MEPS you were shipped from. This is your first experience in the Army. I was there for 11 days. You are usually only there for 3 days. You get issued your first gear here, you are taught how to do basic

marching, and do basic processing like getting ID cards.

Riot Grenade: grenade filled with CS tear gas

ROTC - Reserve Officer Training Corps: This is a program where the military pays for college and you train in the summers and at the end, you serve as an officer, usually for 6 years.

Smart Books - Soldiers Manual. This is a very thick but small book that is camouflage covered and tells you everything that you will learn during Basic Training.

Smoked - This is generally done as an entire platoon. When the Drill Sergeant is unhappy with the performance of one or more of your platoon, you are made to do push-ups as well as any other exercises for as long as they want. The most strenuous one is getting up at attention and down into the push-ups position and back and forth really fast. One of the other platoons in our company were always smoked with their entire MOPP4 gear on (rubber chemical suits).

Sound Off - You have to yell out loud your rank, last name, and social security number followed by Drill Sergeant in order to get served food.

SPORTS - an anachronism for how to clear a rifle if the bullet gets jammed into the rifle and you cannot fire it.

UCMJ - Uniform Code of Military Justice. These are the laws you are under as a member of the military. Whenever you get in trouble, you get the civilian penalty plus the military one which is usually much worse. For not obeying one order, you can be sentenced to one year in a military prison after which you will get a dishonorable discharge, which disqualifies you for any type of assistance from the Veterans Administration or any other benefit veterans get. You can also be sentenced to death for rape, and receive prison time for adultery.

Weapons Ready: marching while you are holding your rifle in your hand with your finger on the trigger, ready to shoot

Zeroing. This is the process of firing at a target and then adjusting your rifle sights, so that everything lines up correctly. This is why you are assigned a different rifle for each person.

11 Jul 96

Dear Mom and Dad,

I have just finished my first day of Basic Training and it is not fun in any sense. I am writing this letter during fireguard - I got the best shift (9-11pm). I have to have it in by 04:35 hours tomorrow morning. Reception Battalion was boring but this is a nightmare. Once I get through the Red Phase - the first 2 weeks - my platoon will move on to Basic Rifle Marksmanship and I won't be so stressed (maybe). The main part of our training is on marching, Physical Training, and lectures. I was called a "smart ass" for some unknown reason - I think I was misunderstood but I should have thought quicker so that I didn't slip up even the slightest bit that I did. I am "Protestant: other" because the Army doesn't know anything about any kind of Quakers. My head has been throbbing ever since the Drill Sergeant started getting annoyed, because people didn't speak up at the right instance when they had a problem. I can kind of empathize with how the Drill Sergeants must feel about us, when we are so stressed out we become paralyzed to reason about little things, but it is hard to focus when you get so little sleep (9 pm to 3:45 am minus - usually - a 2 hour watch) and you can be dropped for push-ups if the Drill Sergeant thinks your question is dumb. The training I can stand the significance of even from my warped perspective. In order for us to win wars in the Information Age, all 250 MOS's must perform their duties perfectly accurate in instantaneous speeds and be able to work together as a team to win because there is no second place in war. They want us to work harder than we ever had before so that we can develop a work ethic. They want to be in our face enough to unite the platoon into one cohesive unit. I am so glad I am not E-3 or E-4, because I think someone would have to be supernatural to lead others right on track, while not slipping up themselves. The privates are all very different from each other, but there is already a strong brotherhood forming - and that is what will build the momentum to carry us on through the next 8 weeks. There are only 55 days to go and counting, which is sev-

eral eternities, when you can barely plan ahead enough for the next day, if you're lucky. We did some push-ups already for not making our beds quick enough, but it hurt much more to think that maybe I was holding up the platoon than the pain of the physical exercise. Being embarrassed in front of your buddies is an effective motivator, because you have to fall back on your buddies, when you cannot carry on some other time, and you want to make sure you'll be ready to catch them when they fall, and how can you, when you can't even keep your own self in order. Most punishments involve the whole group, but this develops teamwork, not persecution, as you might expect. I found some Bible verses that were helpful to me: 2 Corinthians 12:9-10, Galatians 6:9-10, and Psalm 90. I was concerned that my Reception Platoon would make Basic a living Hell, but they got split up and no one would dare to screw off even though the DS can only punish you with physical exercise. Our platoon must have finished dinner in 10-15 minutes (including the time we stood in line) because you cannot even lift your head while eating let alone talk. No one messes around with the women or the weapons, because you can be fined hundreds of dollars for carrying one round off range by accident, or by saying one word a female might choose to use against you. I can get up to one year in prison and thousands of dollars in fines and a dishonorable discharge for not following any order, no matter how inconsequential, under the Uniform Code of Military Justice. I hope I don't ever make one wrong step in line, forget 1 item of gear, or misunderstand any one word the DS says or s/he will "smoke" my whole platoon. I've been having a little trouble with my allergies, but I don't want to get an Article 15 for having non-prescription drugs in my possession. Please pray for me. I am continually tempted to try to get kicked out, but I am going to follow the DS's advice and follow through my decision like a man, because although I made a good choice, my choice now calls me to a higher standard of everything. The "Hurry Up and Wait" system of the military program is very distracting and disturbing, but you would be surprised at how careful soldiers are monitored for and how well they prevent needless red tape. I found out

that one soldier was a so stressed that he had to throw up and I felt better. You wouldn't believe how little time we have to keep clean shaven, sanitize ourselves, get into correct uniform (incl. polishing our boots), keep our barracks and latrine in immaculate cleanliness, read our "Smart Books" and keep remembering everything the DS tells us about even once - in such a way that if you ask him to repeat it, he won't believe that you can't remember his assignment/lesson. I have already memorized my General Orders and Rank Insignia. I feel like I am hallucinating often on watch. Once I woke up sure that the DS was screaming in our faces and soon learned that no one was up and that the DS wasn't even there. The Bible luckily is always the only acceptable reading material besides our "Smart Books." I hope we can keep the DS from raising his voice for most of tomorrow. The first time they "smoke" us will be the worst and I am sure it will be soon. Push-ups are really one of the hardest physical exercises. I'm glad I stuck to the list I was given to pack for Basic verbatim because I just barely got by doing push-ups for it (as it was I had to buy quite a few items at the Reception Battalion PX, to complete the official list of required items. We finished our showers a few minutes late - 64 people through 6 showers in less than 20 minutes - but the DS did not get up to check on us, so we didn't get smoked. We are getting plenty early tomorrow, so we will have a reasonable chance to not louse up for a while. I can barely fight off the sleepy headedness as my shift comes to close. Hopefully I will be able to fall asleep soon. 3:45 am comes around to early. Please write soon.

Your Son,
Benjamin

20 Jul 96

Dear Parents,

There is so much to say and I don't know where to start so I'll just start in the middle. My first letter was fairly morbid, but I have relaxed manifold since then. My Drill Instructors are fair and reasonable for the most part for their kind, but one of them is being replaced in a few

days and he (the replacement) is much stricter (but this will help me on my PT test and help my platoon pull together more). I have already past my 2-mile run and 2-minutes sit-ups test with scores of 71% (14.44) and 55% (47) - you need 50% to pass (60% for airborne). I was only able to score 38% with 20 pushups, but they make you go much lower than I practiced for, and within a two minute limit and I used a mat, which I had to keep my arms in, so I had to go down farther. Next time I won't use the mat, so I can spread out my arms farther and now that I know how far to go down I will waste less energy, so I should be able to do more. If I just do a few more, I will qualify for the phase change so I will get more privileges and will get shouted at less. We have already done Bayonet Training, Marching Practice, Manual of Arms (marching with rifles), Basic Rifle Orientation, lectures on the UCMJ (laws), Personal Hygiene, Sexual Harassment/Equal Opportunity, HIV/AIDS, Sabotage and Subversion, Code of Conduct, Military Customs and Courtesies, Fire Guard, and Kitchen Patrol. We have been issued most of our gear and learned most of the marching formations and maneuvers. I have memorized my Chain of Command, Phonetic Alphabet, Ranks and Insignia, and General Orders. I attended the Protestant Church Service the last couple Sundays. The service was very refreshing and I was encouraged to hear other soldiers who were excited about Christianity - their testimonies helped me relax. I was also good for my heart to hear some music. I decided I would try to be a Chaplain's Assistant, if my job with computers doesn't work out for me for some reason. I might be able to be a Chaplain in the Army Reserves, after I graduate from college, if I can get registered as a minister, with the Friends Church even though I won't get a religious major. That way, I start out as a Captain, instead of a 2nd Lieutenant and I would like to work with soldiers through their spiritual problems - I like their attitudes. We had several locker inspections so far, but I wasn't checked because I had KP one time and the other we were randomly checked and I wasn't selected, but my locker would pass any check anytime. Hospital corners and locker organization are not hard if you are a perfectionist and take the

time to check and re-check until it is perfect. I am slow on some of my marching maneuvers and my manual of arms, but I am the best by far in memorization. I feel like I never get quite enough sleep (about 7 1/2 hours), but the PT, although intense, doesn't require an unreasonable amount of effort, and even when we get smoked, although we are in pain at the time, we usually feel better after having done it. Just today, I got angry at someone, but I feel justified for having felt that way. While I was walking across the Chow Hall to clean my tray, I overheard a Drill Sergeant ridiculing a female private, for being too heavy and threatened to smoke her until he broke her and she would stop eating so much. I glared at him for a while, stunned, and had to exert an extreme amount of effort to keep from beating the living crud out of him. Definitely an injustice, but the private was being a glutton and had volunteered for serving the Army knowing it would entail those kinds of things. Later on, I found out that Army regulations require commanders to promote a specified percentage of white female, black female, other female, white male, black male, and other male soldiers from each category, even if some of the candidates aren't as qualified as the ones s/he wanted to promote. This is the end of my 10th day, I have 46 more to do, but they keep on going faster each day. My battalion graduates on the 4th of September. I ship off to my advanced training on the 5th. My advanced training starts on the 13th. I get 2.5 days leave a month which I can save up to 60 days worth of. Please write if you have time. I have to take a shower and shine my boots now. Luckily our HIV/AIDS presentation didn't spark many questions, so we finished early and so I had time to write this letter to you. Don't expect telephone calls - I only have between 8 and 11:30 am EST on Sundays to call - the lines are 3 hours long and I go to church, clean my boots, and do my wash, during that time.

Your Son,
Benjamin

P.S. I will be purchasing pictures with my uniform on (with all the badges), a Cycle Book (memory book) and a video of the highlights of Basic Training, so you can see

what I did. I found out that Victory Towers is on the 24th of July (that's a cool high ropes obstacle confidence course) and the Gas Chamber is on August 1st (which is not fun, but will at least clear my sinuses). So far, I have managed not to go on sick call once, even when I didn't feel very good. We haven't had to do push-ups for mail yet, but I don't know if we will be able to eat cookies without PT to burn the calories off.

28 Jul 96

We are halfway through our third week and we have experienced Drill Sergeant Pelehach for about a week. Pelehach reminds me of Lieutenant Commander Queeg in *The Caine Mutiny* (by Herman Wook), He always has this smirk on his face, he is paranoid, and he drops us for push-ups for no other reason than he just feels like it. He did drop down and do push-ups with us the first time and he does explain why he does the seemingly irrational things he does. He wants to give us stress, so we learn how to deal with change, as modern warfare is so fluid. He wants us to work as a team, so he makes himself the common enemy, so that we would have the opportunity to unite against him. Other training we have been through recently, not mentioned in earlier letters or postcards, include: rifle aiming, function check, foxhole and prone firing positions, environmental awareness, ethics, rape prevention, family planning, rescue breathing, and applying a pressure dressing. Several negative things happened. Private Cruise (a member of our platoon still here after several cycles for getting injured and not taking care of the injury and deciding to try Basic again) attempted suicide, so they put her in the psychiatric ward in a padded cell. Lesson: Don't just attempt to commit suicide - either go all the way or just carry on. \$13 dollars was stolen from me - I left my locker unattended once when I had to go down to formation and didn't have time to lock it - the rest was luckily in money orders (my cash advance), but most people lost a lot more. I found out that I am left eye dominant, which means I have to fire my rifle as a left handed person would, which makes it harder to hold it

steady for long periods of time. I signed up for an 11" x 14" of my platoon and an Annual of my graduating class and pictures of some of the training we underwent. We are just starting cadence, which makes marching more fun, especially the other day, when it rained for the first time while we were outside and not told to put our rain gear on - I became very emotional, as I was reminded of running back in Oregon. I also found a way to get a lot of leave very early. Ask SSG Rodriguez to sign me up for the *Hometown Recruiting Program*. The Hometown Recruiting Program would allow me to receive up to 40 days "leave" as long as I work for the Springfield Recruiting Station immediately after AIT, before I ship off for permanent duty station and this "leave" would not be deducted from the 30 days authorized per year. I would like to use the time to ask SSG Rodriguez about how good a shape you need to be in to go to Air Assault School (repelling off helicopters) and describe what happens at Ranger School in more detail. I would also like some time to pack up some of my belongings and several other things.

Your Son

Benjamin

P.S. Please send Rebecca's address. Please pray for me when I go to the gas chamber on August 1st.

11 Aug 96

Dear Parents,

This week we started Basic Rifle Marksmanship on Range 1 "South Carolina". I zeroed my rifle and I grouped my triangulations. I have learned to pick out human silhouettes from the tree-line, and I have shot at single and multiple targets that come up and down at random distances, along a specific lane, for only a few seconds. A few weeks ago, when we were driven past the BRM ranges, I was impressed with how beautiful it was under the little trees, but now I know how penetrating the heat can be and how long a day at the range can be, or how frustrating it can be to be ate-up and be told you are letting the entire team down, by being clueless, even though you are doing your very best. Tuesday night, we were on Bivouac

(camping) out near the BRM ranges. I was one of the fastest to both set up and take down my tent. We had a camouflage demonstration - all you need is light green and loam. We practiced noise discipline and used only red flashlights. The sandy soil worked great for the tent stakes. I was impressed with how adaptable and durable the military gear issued to us as privates. We were only smoked once and didn't have to march far. Thursday, we marched 4 miles with rucksacks to Range 12. My knee cramped up and gave me some trouble towards the end, but I stayed in step and in formation. Thursday night I had to be a buddy for another one of the battle buddies, so he could go to the hospital, which cut down on my sleep even further. Friday I was able to keep my rifle up the entire time that we did rifle PT, even though I did 100 sit-ups and 400 push-ups the day before (for leaving my night sight up instead of my day sight - I forgot to slip it back after cleaning it). I am also improving significantly at my Manual of Arms (rifle drill and ceremony). At the single and double targets range, the NCOIC of the range - the sergeant giving the commands from the tower - sounded like an auctioneer and I had a hard time not laughing, because there was a sergeant with a Marine Corps tattoo, who was just appalled at how stupid we were - we were so nervous, we went the wrong direction, and the "auctioneer" told the DS over the loudspeaker which lanes to watch well, which when you looked over there, you could tell they were missing all the targets and were behind a few commands. Saturday, we started double targets in the BRM range. I was so tired from fire watch the night before, but I still did much better. And as the targets become more and more lifelike I do better and better. My platoon does the best on Manual of Arms now and we are the only ones in our company who knew the counts to the 15-count Manual of Arms, so we can live up to last cycles "2nd to none" reputation. Our platoon is re-adjusting its pecking order, as we are half way through our 5th week. After BRM qualification on the 14th, I will be able to relax a little. It is very hot out on the range and we have virtually no time to get our personal hygiene and weapon cleaning done. I am going to try to call once

a week to keep my sanity. This Sunday, I am waiting in line, during the service and hopefully I will finish in time before Bible study, but I may have waited too long for either.

PAST EVENTS

We now have a Drill Cadet named Saban. She is really cool. She wears a silver circle mirror on her cap to denote her rank, which is roughly equivalent to that of our Drill Sergeants. She is in the ROTC program (probably she will be going into her junior year in college as she has just completed her 6-week Basic Course - ROTC Basic Training). She dropped with us when DS Pelehach smoked us and she only drops us for 5 push-ups when we do something really stupid. She isn't arrogant like the other Drill Cadets. She doesn't do very well at cadence calls and she won't let us use sexual or dirty words or phrases in our cadence. I have received my first Leave and Earnings Statement: I have 25 days leave accumulated and \$514 deposited in my account not including \$200 Casual Pay, but without the Montgomery GI Bill money or laundry fees taken out (they will probably be deducted from my LES that I will get on the 15th). On my last PT test, I improved my push-ups from 20 to 30, my sit-ups from 47 to 70 and my 2 mile run from 14:44 to 13:03. That bumped me up from the "B" to the "A" running group and kept me from passing the final PT test by 2 push-ups. I will probably get about 40 push-ups, 80 sit-ups, and about 12:30 this Saturday on my PT test, which will give me enough points to pass my AIT PT tests, I passed into White Phase, by scoring high enough on my PT test and stayed off my DS's Sugar Honey Ice Tea list by passing my communications, map, rifle function check, first aid, rank identification, and saluting an officer tests. I decided not to try for any Military Combat Training like Air Assault or Ranger Schools and instead get as much leadership and academic schooling as possible to avoid being drafted for infantry, even though that is fairly unlikely. I have come to realize that I would learn how to survive in combat better by learning Jiu-Jitsu (the martial art developed from Bruce Lee's Jeet Kune Do concepts) as I would like to train gradually over a long pe-

riod of time, so I can really understand what I am learning. Jiu-Jitsu covers fighting in all situations as in it has no fixed fighting stance and would prepare me for combat without making it more likely for me to be sent to combat. Some of those in the Rangers and the Airborne think that they are so bad that they "never die, they just go to Hell to regroup" and that they don't need help from anyone, even God. I took communion for the first time this last Sunday in I don't know how many years. It was more special to me as I had been through Hell in my own mind's eye in the gas chamber a few days before. We have also been pre-trained in Claymore Mines, how to respond to NBC attack, and how to identify Soviet weaponry.

Your Son,
Benjamin

19 Aug 96

Dear Parents,

Much has happened in the last week. I'll go chronologically this time. I ordered several platoon t-shirts with our insignia and motto on them. We did some push-ups, where we dipped down between two chairs - 3 sets of 30. They really build muscle tone and endurance in the entire arm, especially the chest and shoulders. We now get to eat frozen yogurt on Sundays. I don't miss candy much. We get candy in our MREs, that we can eat, but it is usually too rich for me, since I haven't had it for so long. It's hard to get a good balance of food, as we have so little time to pick up what we want in the chow hall, but I get plenty of fruit, grain, and dairy. I thought that I might miss not knowing what's going on in the world, but I don't waste time on newspapers, because it is all the same anyway. I do miss music though. My creative side lies dormant in my sleep. I have had some weird dreams lately. There is so little time to appreciate nature and to stop and think out alone. We did our first 5 mile tactical road march, with weapons ready, like the Roadrunner Battalion in Vietnam. The day before the Final BRM Record Qualification Day, my whole platoon with our Drill Sergeant Roberts and my battle buddy led the prayer. We even had

2 privates from the platoon we bunk with join. We prayed that we could win a ribbon for DS Roberts and work as a team, so we could all qualify the first time. On Final BRM Record Qualification Day, we started doing push-ups as a platoon, when just one person was dropped, this time DS Roberts dropped with us. As my firing number came up, I walked up singing "Rushing Wind" to myself out loud. I missed too many, from the foxhole, because our site posts were blackened by the DS as we walked in so it took me too long to realize that I was aiming for the bottom of the blackened part on the sight post. When I went to the prone unsupported firing position, I hit almost every target - 1 shot/1 kill every time. My DS thought I would bolo, so the 250 and 300 meter targets went up and down for me and counted as if I shot them every time. My DS Roberts put her thumb up and smiled and the Tower announced that everyone in my firing order qualified. The CO pinned the badge on me. My Company was best in the whole battalion and my platoon was the best in the company at BRM. We are still waiting for DS Pelehach to do 200 push-ups for our platoon guide when she qualified as an expert. We did night fire later that day. It is so dark that most people didn't even bother to sync their sights. We were told to shoot the wrong targets, so I shot enough targets for both me and the guy next to me to get a go, by switching back and forth between both targets that could be mine. The tracers were beautiful though. I was lucky enough to shoot while it was still light enough to get a go (7/30) but the DS didn't even keep track of who was on what lane. We got to bed by 11:30, and were up by 4:30 the next morning for PT. I also had fire guard for someone on KP the next day. The next day, we fired with our NBC Pro masks on, and I freaked out, because I couldn't get it on quick enough and I could still smell CS gas in it. We also fired on burst this time, with my right hand, which was much easier. In fact, I hit every target and DS Pelehach asked me why I didn't fire right handed before. I answered - I was told to fire left handed, because DS Evans said that I was left eye dominant. It won't be too hard to qualify as a sharpshooter, after AIT, right handed. We also had a Health and Welfare inspection ordered by

my CO to find who had condoms, cake, pornos, and other contraband. Drill Cadet Saban inspected my locker, so my gear was not thrown around. I also found out that if I am stationed with a Light Infantry Regiment, life will be very hard- 25 miles a day with 100 lb. pack over rough terrain and sheer cliffs at quick time in step - but that is unlikely to happen to me as I will be working with computers. We went back to the Reception Battalion and were issued our Class "B" and "A" Uniforms. Everyone looked better in a uniform and I was able to sneak in a little contraband sleep. We had our 3rd PT test. I got 12:42 on my 2-mile run, 84 on my sit-ups in 2 minutes, and 43 push-ups in 2 minutes. I passed the Basic and AIT standards already, and I phased into Blue Phase with the rest of my company. My platoon lost the Drill and Ceremony Competition by 1 point. We fired an M-60 Machine Gun with live ammunition, M-203 Grenade Launcher with paint balls, and an AT-4 Anti-Tank Round with 9mm tracer ammunition. The M-60 was too loud and jammed into my shoulder uncomfortably. The Grenade Launcher was a glorified paint-ball gun and was almost impossible to aim with the funky sight. The AT-4 was too light to balance, when you couldn't put the back blast area into the pocket of your shoulder, and was too much weight in back, compared to the weight in front. The Battalion Commander walked by me and tested me to make sure I was watching to make sure my back blast area was clear. We learned how to administer a nerve agent antidote to our body and started reviewing for individual proficiency tests at the end of the cycle. Two members of my platoon were flirting, so DS Pelehach gave them a nice "evening out" in the chow hall, after they paid \$189 for an Article 15. Only 2 weeks left. Please send me pictures of family and my checks.

Your Son,
Benjamin

25 Aug 96

Dear Parents,

Basic Training is tougher than ever before and it is so hard to see the end of the road, as I get more and more

depressed each day thinking about FTX and being gassed with CS out in the field. We learned how to low crawl, high crawl, and 3-5 second rush for our basic Individual Movement Techniques. This is to minimize the amount of time that you give away your position and expose yourself to sniper fire. Low crawl is the most tiring and the most dirty IMT besides being the slowest, but your profile is so low that it is almost impossible to be hit and your kevlar helmet protects your entire body. Low crawling can also be used to get under barbed wire. Low crawling isn't too bad in the sand, but hurts a lot over roots. We also learned how to signal for Set, Moving, Hold, and Danger Area. That night, we started learning how to use Interlocking Fire to defend a position. This emphasizes the necessity of teamwork out in the field. You cannot defend yourself. You have to cover your buddy and let him cover you, so your lines of fire criss cross to form a wall of hot lead. We saw a demonstration. When the enemy came too close, they set off claymore mines, threw hand grenades, had the M-60 machine gunner fire across the length of their positions, to create a very dense and deadly wall of lead, while tying up only one gunner. Then the rifle bearing soldiers were freed up to aim for and pick off the enemy one by one. Flares were sent off to signal major themes of the battle. White flares illuminated the battlefield, green meant start firing, and red means cease-fire. The next day, we qualified for grenades and threw 2 live M-69 Fragmentation Grenades. We were shown what an Incendiary, White Smoke, and Colored Smoke looked like when employed. I freaked out, so they didn't throw the CS Gas grenade (8-10x as strong as the gas chamber), even though they would throw it far enough that it wouldn't drift over towards us. I qualified as a Marksman on the Grenade Qualification Course. As I realized the power in the Fragmentation Grenades and was let go to the live fire range before I felt like I knew what I was doing, I started freaking out. They made me go first, and let the best instructor talk me through it. We put on our Kevlars and put on a Kevlar jacket and we were behind a concrete wall with reinforced steel, but that still isn't comforting when you don't know how much power

the grenade has. The instructor told me how it must not be dangerous as he did it every day and he was sane. I looked up and saw only little craters and couldn't see any shrapnel in the sand and the target didn't even appear scathed. I was more calm, when I picked up the live grenade, then when I used the practice ones, because it was easier to use and felt the right weight. I aimed and threw as far as I could and dropped my head and arms between my legs, as I squatted down in less than a split second. Luckily my instructor was holding me down, because the time delay was so long (3-5 seconds) that I almost stood up, to see if I remembered to pull the pin. When I went back into the protection area and looked through the 5 panes of bullet proof glass, the grenades didn't seem to blow up too large an area (5-10 feet) and all you saw was sand kicked up in the air, but the shrapnel must have been sent far, because shrapnel penetrated up to 4 panes deep. I sat down immediately, when I noticed this, so I was protected by even thicker concrete and steel. The next day, I KPD'd for another battalion, so I got out of low crawling all day. The last few days, we have been going through all the Individual Proficiency Tasks in our assigned groups (1/2 platoon size) to make sure we are so thoroughly brainwashed with the correct answers that we can't possibly screw up, even if we sound off as a group. We took our final PT test and I did 53 push-ups (70%), 85 sit-ups (92%) (both in 2 minutes) and 12:45 (93%) on my 2 mile run (I would have ran faster, but my battle buddies kept on yelling CS gas, so I lost my concentration). We can now drink soda and eat cake when DS Roberts is on duty (she smokes us before we eat to burn off the calories). I finally got my NBC Protective Mask to seal and will practice getting it on in less than 9 seconds, so I won't get a mouthful of CS, when they drop it on us at FTX. I passed everything required, so I will not be held back unless I go insane or go on profile, when it is time for me to ship off. I talked to the DS, the Chaplain, and my battle buddies about the CS - I almost quit over it, but they have helped me and will not gas us bad, because they don't want me to go insane and kill someone. I think my DS is reassured, because I told him I will forewarn

him, before I do something stupid. It seems you have to learn to speak, to walk, and to think all over again in the Army - I forgot everything I ever learned and lost all my self-confidence but it will come back after FTX. Just pray that I make it that far. If I do make it that far, I made plans with one of my battle buddies. His parents will sign me out and take me out to dinner (and I will have more than 5 minutes to eat, I can talk, and don't have to sound off and stand at ease in line). I will be able to relax tremendously after FTX, but the depression may be much worse during AIT, as I am away longer and longer from Oregon and the people I am used to. 5 days of training, 4 days of cleaning and out-processing and 2 days of graduation left. I am going to ask the chaplain to pray for me for the first time. I hope I break my back or the pain in my ears turns out to be an ear infection so I can get out of FTX. I have to wake up my relief so I can get off fireguard and get a couple hours sleep. Oh, we got our platoon t-shirts in - they are beautiful - I might frame one.

Your Son,
Benjamin

1 Sep 96

This Monday, we completed the End of Cycle Individual Proficiency Tests, otherwise known as "Super Bowl." There were 10 stations with 20 or 30 tasks. I passed (got a "go") on 8 of the stations. At the claymore mine deployment and recovery, I left the test set in when I fired it, so I got a no-go. At the rifle malfunction clearing station, I performed SPORTS (slap magazine, pull the charging handle back, observe the chamber, release the charging handle, tap the forward assist, and squeeze the trigger) wrong, because I used the wrong hand and the 2nd time because I switched the 2 S's. On Tuesday, we went to the confidence course. We climbed towers and ropes and went down a command wire. We also low crawled under barb wire and mounted various obstacles. On Wednesday, we left for Field Training Exercises (FTX) - this was by far the worst "camping" experience I have ever had. They only gassed us once, but they threw a lot of smoke

grenades very close to my fighting position. The first time one of the Drill Sergeants set off a white smoke grenade 20 ft. from me, I hesitated for a split second, because I didn't think riot grenades made a "snap-crackle-pop" sound, but I still managed to get my mask cleared and sealed and run down the hill in 4 seconds. No one else had gotten their mask out of the carrier. Then we realized that the wind was blowing the opposite direction and that it wasn't CS. We were just below the grenade range and a rifle range and my battle buddy kept coughing, so I was always ready to put my mask on. I found out that CS doesn't "boom" and is grey, and wispy so I could identify it before I totally freaked out. I knew we would not be gassed at night, but I still slept with my mask right on my left leg in its carrier. When they called us out to form along the main road, Thursday night, I knew we would be gassed. They always gassed the road and they wanted to make sure everyone was gassed equally. The CO gave us a lecture on lightening safety procedures, as the DSs were tying CS canisters on the end of their staffs. They started at the other end of the company formation and my mask was cleared and sealed long before the gas got near. There first was a smoke bomb and then we were told "All Clear" then came the real gas and I got mine on in time again. Some guys said "all clear" and some morons took off their masks and were hurting bad. The DS made us take off our masks before it was really all clear, but my battle buddies helped keep me from running. I threw dirt on my hands and kept my eyes closed so it wasn't as bad. It took us all day Wednesday to dig and camouflage our foxhole. We had to clear 6 ft. in all directions around the fighting position. The hole had to be 2 kevlar helmets long, 2 M-16 rifles wide, and arm pit deep of the tallest buddy (me). We then had to arrange some 80 odd sandbags to cover our position and we covered all that with sticks, leaves, needles, and small bushes to conceal it. On of my DS's (DS Pelehach) took me out on a mission. We were to assault an "enemy" position demonstrating our: map, first aid, communication, perimeter security, and out individual movement technique skills. My DS had a simulation fragmentation grenade and a white smoke grenade with CS

riot grenade markings on it to see if I would run when he threw it. He threw it fairly far away and the wind blew it the other way, but it was too dense and the people running through it too calm for it to be CS. My DS Roberts took me on a night raid with flare for illumination. It was fun. The march back was between 4-6 miles with full combat gear (carrying our rifles at ready arms) but I was relaxed and I started to remember our training and back at high school and see them both as real at the same time. We are cleaning and turning in all our gear we used in Basic. I probably don't owe any money for anything. We went to a concert on post with All 4 One and Planet Soul which was really relaxing although late at night. I am looking forward to graduation, AIT, and home more and more as I can finally see the end of the road.

Your Son,
Benjamin

2.1.3 Military Poetry

Memories of a Soldier

The Dark

Is is dark now
And I fight to stay awake
I never was this tired before
But my time in the Army
Sure was exhausting
And many things I still remember
Happened at night
The night of our arrival
At Reception Battalion
Lasted far past midnight
It took us hours to get into formation
And to stop talking
I don't remember
What processing they were doing
That took all that time
The night watch was so long
I read my green Gideon's pocket bible
And scoured its indexes

Finding helpful verses
I still don't know
What we were watching for
At Basic Training
Day started in a flash of light
The light switch was flipped
And we jumped out of bed
And ran into formation
Then we ran out into the dark
And stopped under stadium lights
My arrival to my Duty Station
Was in the deep of night
So idyllic with the palm trees
And the fresh sea air
I was lost of course
Following Drill Sergeants orders
I didn't get on the bus
With the rest of the soldiers
But I found my way to my unit
With a lot of help
Ironically the cab dropped me off
Within feet of my assigned battalion
I walked to and from my job
Usually in the dark of dawn or dusk
And I wore my sleeves long
And wore mountain boots
Because it can get chilly
With the air conditioning so high

Fear and Excitement

My experience in the Army
Was full of fear and excitement
I was terrified of being tortured
But I was thrilled beyond imagination
At being part of history
The risk is beyond human
But with the adrenaline going
You forget all the problems that could arise
I knew what I was doing was important
And it was exciting work

For someone just out of high school
Hawaii was a dream on earth
And the activities were plentiful
The land and ocean are breath taking
But the people are what keep you there
One bus travels the perimeter of Oahu
From North Shore to Waikiki
By Scofield Barracks and Pearl Harbor
Location is everything
And that was perfect
But my mind was tormented
With long bouts of depression and paranoia
In my barracks
I was kept awake
With fear of deployment
And fear of chemical attack
I had no trouble at work
My supervisors were amazed at my performance
I tested out of a year of college
And maxed out my sit-ups portion of the PT test
But worries worked at my stomach
And I could never relax
I saw the island
But had trouble enjoying anything
It was not that I was just negative
But my mood kept me on a bad course
When I went in for counseling
They knew something was wrong

Churches Numerous

God was very real to me
When I was in the Army
And the church was the safest place for me
A place where little was expected
I went to church during Basic Training
There were no Drill Sergeants there
And there were no orders to follow
At Advanced Individual Training

I attended a Methodist church
A block from our barracks
The other soldiers wondered why
I went every week
But that was all I had left of myself
When I arrived at my Duty Station
I tried a number of churches
I found a church next to my barracks again
But I was the only white person there
It was full of excitement
And people even danced in church
It was Church of God in Christ denomination
But I don't remember their theology
My roommate drove me to his church
At the other end of the island
This was the best church in Honolulu
It was Word of Life Christian Center
Or something like that
This was the First Charismatic/Pentecostal
church
I attended regularly
It was a great place to meet
Nice young women my age
And they had activities for 20 somethings
Another church I went to was called
Oahu Church of Christ or something like that
They met in the form of potlucks
At a different place every time
And there were always outdoor baptisms
At every service
The final church I went to
Was just outside the base
Every Sunday was a salvation message
And members were expected to come
Other times of the week as well
Saturday nights the preacher answered ques-
tions
And there was prayer and speaking in tongues
Every other night throughout the week

Safe and Sound**The Recruiter**

I took a long time deciding
Whether or not to join the military
One of my interests in it
Was that I could do something
Interesting just out of high school
And go to a much better college
And not be in debt from student loans
I was also stressed out with all the reading
We did my senior year and I was looking
Forward to have some time away
From a rigorous academic program
I chose to go enlisted because I wanted
To get my military service out of the way
Before I went to college
Because even then I didn't
Think it would be very enjoyable
I found out later that there is little
A person can do to prepare for Basic Training
Except getting into good over all physical shape
I had run most years of high school in
Cross Country and Long Distance Track
And my senior year I worked out all summer
And took an intensive conditioning course
The last half of my senior year
I signed up a whole year in advance
So I got an interesting job in the Army
Working with computers
I remember asking my recruiter directly
About the NBC training
And whether or not our enemies would be
Using chemical weapons in combat
He directly denied it
I wasn't afraid of being killed
But I didn't want to be burned alive
The brochures painted one side of
Someone's imagination of military life
But being in the Army is very different
The only thing I had really known

That was correct was that it didn't
Require much brain power even for
The most advanced engineering job

Basic Training

The first thing that shocked me
Was how much easier the physical training
And how more friendly my fellow soldiers were
Than I had expected
The downside was that I didn't
Rise to the occasion as much as I had hoped
The first 2 weeks of Basic Training
You get yelled at a lot from the Drill Sergeants
And you learn to march
As well as watch films on all sorts of things
Like the military judicial system (UCMJ)
And a scare film about STDs
You also get issued gear during this period
It is really easy to get out then
But there is nothing very stressful yet
Next you learn the Manual of Arms
How to move the rifle in ceremony and safely
I had to drop and do push-ups
Each time any procedure was explained
As I seemed to keep on getting it wrong
Then we had a confidence building course
That we had to repel and climb through
Various towers somewhat like an obstacle course
Then they do pictures and no one is allowed to
smile
Of course that wasn't hard as we were to go
To the gas chamber in a few days
I was told the gas chamber didn't cause any
pain
And that you only had to
Hold your breath for a few seconds
You go in this small dark room
With your mask on and you feel
Your hands are burning painfully
Then you are told to take off the mask

Not only can you barely breathe
But it feels like your
Lungs and eyes are on fire
We were kept in there for at least 5 minutes
And we were the last platoon in
So we had much more of the CS gas
In the room at the time
As they put another stick in each time
Another platoon went in
This is when I realized the
Risks I was taking by enlisting
After that, we spent 2 weeks
Learning how to shoot the M-16 (BRM)
I thought I would never pass
But the drill sergeant gave me a lane
Where the 300m target jumped up
And down and counted for me
No matter if I hit it or not
We then trained with a live grenade
I freaked out about this
Until I got the live grenade and then
It just felt like throwing a baseball
Except after you throw it you dive
Down in your foxhole and put
Your head between your legs
For training we didn't have a foxhole
But we had a cement wall
We stood behind, we wore a kevlar
Helmet and vest and the sergeant
Jumped on us to make sure we were down
These grenades are safe as long as you aren't
Standing up as they explode at a high angle
Then we went to field training exercises (FTX)
I didn't do very good at digging a foxhole
But my battle buddy slept while I
Watched for the Drill Sergeant
One time, the Drill Sergeant pulled my rifle
Out of my hands, so I had to low crawl
In the dirt, but later I gathered
That she was saving me from the
Other Drill Sergeant who was going to throw

CS gas into my foxhole
I slept with my protective mask on that night
Then we did a big test on everything
We learned for combat survival
I failed the clearing a rifle from a jam test (SPORTS)
And I left the test button connected when
I set off my claymore mine and yelled "clay-
more"
I was supposed to be punished for that
But it didn't happen for some reason
During the last week, the head Drill Sergeant
For the platoon announced in front of everyone
That if I wasn't already promoted as high
As she could promote, then she would have
Chosen my above all the other soldiers
The only thing that happened the same every
day
Was that we woke up once the lights were turned
on
We jumped out of bed and ran into formation
When we finished training under the football
lights
We went to breakfast as it was getting light
And this was in the middle of the summer
On Sundays we got a few hours off to write let-
ters
And we could go to church or we could do chores
We were also allowed a little time to call home

Advanced Training

Going to advanced training was a big relief
(AIT)
I was shocked to see my roommates
Watch TV and play video games
I was also shocked that we had Drill Sergeants
In advanced training as well
And these ones were out of uniform
The first month or two we did details (chores)
We went to school in rotating schedules
We had morning, swing, and graveyard shifts

Every few months, our class rotated
I went to school with all the other services
I developed allergic pink eye (Conjunctivitis)
Which I continued to have for 3 more years
I think I was more stressed out by
Having to identify who are the officers
And who are the NCOs and their ranks
Than I was afraid of the real potential
Of being exposed to chemical weapons
Going to advanced training was a big relief
(AIT)
I was shocked to see my roommates
Watch TV and play video games
I was also shocked that we had Drill Sergeants
In advanced training as well
And these ones were out of uniform
The first month or two we did details (chores)
We went to school in rotating schedules
We had morning, swing, and graveyard shifts
Every few months, our class rotated
I went to school with all the other services
I developed allergic pink eye (Conjunctivitis)
Which I continued to have for 3 more years
I think I was more stressed out by
Having to identify who are the officers
And who are the NCOs and their ranks
Than I was afraid of the real potential
Of being exposed to chemical weapons
We had much better food as we were on
A Navy base and after the Air Force abandoned
Their "dormitories" we inherited them
They were like the Hilton to us
But they were not up to Air Force standards
The Marines really hated us
As they trained on an Army base before
And they didn't have a good experience
We gradually got more and more privileges
After every few months
We were eventually allowed to leave the base
When I shipped off, everyone was being sent to
Hawaii

People graduating a month or 2 before me
Were sent to Bosnia and Korea
We had much better food as we were on
A Navy base and after the Air Force abandoned
Their "dormitories", we inherited them
They were like the Hilton to us
But they were not up to Air Force standards
The Marines really hated us
As they trained on an Army base before
And they didn't have a good experience
We gradually got more and more privileges
After every few months
We were eventually allowed to leave the base
When I shipped off, everyone was being sent to
Hawaii
People graduating a month or 2 before me
Were sent to Bosnia and Korea

Permanent Duty Station

I graduated on Valentine's Day
And arrived at the air port
In the middle of the night
I took a taxi as the Drill Sergeant told me
On arriving to the base
I did not know where to go
Ironically, I was dropped off in exactly the right
spot
I had to do details my first few weeks
After doing processing at the base
There was a bus that drove
All around the island (Oahu)
So I could see all the sites on my days off
We worked on a rotating swing and graveyard
So I would always have different days off
I attended different churches on the base
In town nearby, in Honolulu, and across the
island
It was so beautiful even in the winter
After working a few months, I got mononucleo-
sis

I also got staff eye infections
One day, half delirious
I went to the commanding officer
And asked to get out of the military
I didn't even care if it was honorable or not
I was referred to the counseling center
They determined that I had a personality disorder
I never even saw anyone other than NCOs
A psychiatrist (a Major) signed off on it at the end
Later I found I had Schizophrenia, but that
The military wanted to save money,
So they didn't diagnose me properly
Before I left, I ran a half marathon through
Kole Kole Pass to a Naval Seal base
I also took some tests that got me credit
For a year of college
And a few months before took some classes
Which in combination, gave me
An entire year as transferable credit later on
So I never was a college freshman
I also had seen most the major tourist sites
Before I left the military
I got out in 5 weeks after talking to the CO
And I got an honorable discharge
This never happens that fast
Even with a dishonorable discharge
God was sure looking out for me

Duality Poetry

A Man, Nothing More

Could a broken soldier be the same man
As a tormented artist and suffering writer
Whose sleep comes harder?
A soldier longs for home
An artist longs for something to hold
In a flash of the camera
A lifetime of experience

A pace that never lets up
A falter in the climb
The fire devours the heart
The heat consumes the poetry
A timid laugh
Shame and disappointment disguised
Too long a Soldier Artist
A pawn of no one
A disfunctioning wheel in the corporate machine
If only my mind would turn off
Like the light switch
Belief without doctrine
Names without distinctions
A word created man
A man uses words for the Creator
My heart may be an invention
But my art is not
In plain clothes
I don't disguise my uselessness
Without personal transportation
Or protein that comes with a face
Too soon a Peasant Scholar

Like a Peasant

A soldier preparing for battle
Smelling a stench that burned the nostrils
I bravely entered into a little room
In the span of several minutes
Eternity passed five times
Alone in hell
I was paralyzed with fear
Compassion was never present
I left with an anger that could not be quenched
Prophet of God
Called to a sacred mission
The only one who could stop the tribulation
Taking the pain upon myself
The suffering of 3-1/2 years in a matter of minutes

The other half as a lonely wanderer
The sun came up and the wind became lively
One life sacrificed for billions of others
I was led by others to a place I did not want to
 go
Hitting rock bottom
Waking up in a room locked from the outside
My life began again I could not advocate for
 myself
Hours went by like weeks
Time was playing tricks on me
One freak in a million who lives by himself
This is truly something
Someone who dared to challenge society
To hold himself accountable to both reason and
 faith
Who challenges himself to create more intelli-
 gent pieces of art each time
Who expands to different disciplines as he breaks
 into one at a time
A happy child with control over his destiny I
 return to the joy of my youth
Now more thoughtful in word and action
A handicap that I struggle with daily
But without pain

Like a Soldier

Fighting all our lives
For just a moment in time
For that natural high
That reflective sigh
For that minute of silence
When the world stops
And you keep going
That sweet sorrow
Comes when we look back
Nothing will be repeated
A feeling that never ends
The moment will fade
But the silence I will keep

And the tune will play in my head
Humor comes in such surprising moments
But the pain lingers on and drags into hours
What will stop the deep sorrow
From penetrating my bruised heart?
We are most alone
When the other first closes the door
Pain is deeper than a bullet wound
When we have a sorrow that can't be resolved
How do we fight
With just one step in front of the other?
Sometimes it is harder just to keep standing
We are not defeated when we fall down
Or fall short of our expectations
And death need not be a defeat
But that is not the worst fate
Some fight with paper
It is not how many balls that land in the trash
That measures their success
It is not the expected outcome
That foreshadows loss
Every moment we breathe with a sigh
That is how we know we are alive
Through the hours that never let up
We do our work with less and less hesitation
But it is not what defines us
It is in the all nighters
And the long evening talks
That we remember

Life's Parallels

Setting down my protective mask
And logging off my workstation for the last
time
My duty done
Someone else will save the world tomorrow
I heard God on the radio
Leaving the fantasy world permanently
The world is no longer a projection of my mind
I swallow the red pill

And wake up outside the protective matrix
I followed God through the start of the millen-
nium
Sitting at a table in a local deli
The radio was on for the first time
Reality comes crashing down
Our nightmares are played on the black box in
our living rooms
God kept me from sinking into my sorrow
Taking a good look behind
I see some of the past in my future
The old world that my ancestors came from is a
news flash away
We are part of them and they are part of us
Time places no limits on God
What separates us from madness and violence
is a very thin line

Other Poetry

Commitment and Freedom

A perfectly made bed
And a perfectly pressed uniform
A hard run across the pavement
And push-ups on the living insect ground cover-
ings
A breakfast of hard grits
And salty juice
A bleached protective mask
And a lubricated rifle
A rotating shift
With different days off every week
Are far from a perfect way
To get an edge on life
Running is the only freedom
When you are being put under combat stress
You're only break is when you are in church
service
When the drill sergeant is always breathing
down your neck

Over 5 years later
Outside the grip of Uncle Sam
There is a calm deep inside
A feeling of silence never leaves
There is no reason to always be alert
There is no threat of attack
There is no one to make all your decisions for
you
There is a freedom in being done with war
There is no allegiance that you have to die for
No commitment that might end your life
There is an excitement that comes
When you can go anywhere tomorrow
There is a contentment that comes
When you know you are working for peace
There is a way that you can relax
When you will not be insulted for slipping up
There is a confidence that comes
When you can plan your own day
War brings nothing good
And being done with it is the greatest relief
Why should we sacrifice
For decisions others have made?
What war ever brought less war to follow?
And when will they ever end?
Maybe if they stop enlisting
The Army will have to cease hostilities

Desert Mist

My eyelids are heavy as depleted uranium
My heart is burned with radiation
In a flash of the flares
And in the yellow smoke
My mind turns to my childhood
To others taken away
In the silent night
Fire-fights lit up the sky
One side obliterated in hours
Burning carcasses littered the desert
The Army goes rolling along

Over barricades at 40 mph
Pausing only seconds between firing
The young knights barely of age
Trampling the cavalry of years gone by
I dream of a time
When my boots were always polished
And my shirt ironed flat
Of fears lived
And hopes vanished
The god of war is steel
And the protector is a rubber mask
In danger I plead with logic
And critical time slips by
There is no escape
From the grips of Uncle Sam
This is a time
That I remember all too well
When staying awake
Is the least of your worries
When hitting the target is an empty goal
And clearing your rifle seems unimportant
There are times when you want to fly away
And now I can
But when you are in the middle of the beast
There is little you can do
Suicide seems rational
But that would bring little relief
When you hear "Gas! Gas! Gas!"
Two and half seconds is not fast enough

Reflections on Soldiering

The room is glowing red
We are convulsing in the furnace
Within a crematoria though alive
We gasp for breathe as though drowning
Little chamber filled with fire
How long will we be locked within your walls?
Large beady eyes glare at us
Telling us to surrender our eyes to the flames
Behind the masks and beneath the suits

Our leaders show no sign of care
No understanding
Of the corrosive atmosphere
Bound within the gates of Hell
We are paralyzed with fear
After spending several ages in fire
The door is flung open
We are allowed out one by one
The burning gradually decreases
And we can begin to breathe again
But at any moment
We may be forced back in
Next time it will be longer
And there is no end in sight
Each day we spend in training
We lose a year's memory
Our days before we went to war
Fade to be nothing more than a dream
There is no time to enjoy life or relax
When every waking hour must be devoted discipline
Our music is the orders of the Drill Sergeant
And our dance is the manual of arms
Our only realm for expression is in our dreams
And our only book is the Soldiers Manual
We believe in the claymore and in our protective masks
They are all that watch over us
We are free when we are running
As long as we are fast enough
How can I live any longer
With the threat of drowning in fire?
I never would have chosen this road
If I knew what war was like
If a POW camp is harder than this life
And combat is both more boring and more terrifying than training
How will I withstand the reality of war?
How will I become a soldier?
There are no more choices to make
After the one that got me here

There is no independence in the Army
There is no justice in what we do
How can we defend others rights
When we have none?
Drill Sergeant says I am now a soldier
That I have been transformed
That there is nothing but shame in turning
 back
That there is hope in what lies ahead
That I will not have to face the same realities
The others will have to face
But I for the first time understand fear
And I cannot trust anyone to save me
I am on my own with no one looking over me
Yet I have no freedom and no escape
I feel like an infant
I feel weak and powerless
But there is no guardian
There is no one I know
Dying doesn't scare me
But the possibilities of suffering do
I see no meaning
Except in avoiding pain
There is no reason to live
And no protection except in death

Total Isolation

When you enlist in the Army
Your life is no longer your own
Joining is the last decision you make
Your intelligence is of no use
And your training a waste of time
There is no way you can get prepared
For a life without freedom
When you lived a life with
Choices for everything
There is only one way to march
One way to shoot a rifle
There is one way to make your bed
And there is only one way

To don your protective mask
There is one way to throw a grenade
And one way to dig a foxhole
There is no time to think about
Theories of war or the Geneva conventions
There is never a time when you
Can let your guard down
Your life is totally committed
You have your reasons for enlisting
But they matter less and less
Enlistment is a one way tunnel
And there are no stops or ways out
You can shoot yourself in the foot
But then your job will just be harder
You can follow your job to the letter
And yet be valued the same
As the biggest screw-up
You could follow directions exactly
And still get captured
The others fail you all the time
But if you ever fail them
The cost is enormous
If you fail to listen to instructions
You could be the next victim
Of the war on terror
You could pay attention to
Every last detail
And still end up needing to be
Identified by DNA

2.1.4 Considering Military Service?

I served in the Army and here are some of the things I found to be both good and bad about the military. I also worked with the other services too, so I know something about them.

Good Points

You can feel confident that you are doing something important and something that not everyone can do. You also

feel like you are accomplishing something important. Remember, whether or not you agree with what the government has sent you to do, you are still being a great help. And you don't have to feel responsible for what your country decides, because the military does not decide when and where to go in.

You meet some great people in the military that you will remember your whole life. They often have strong personalities and are not always friendly at first, but these guys will save your life even by sacrificing their own. The military does a background check on all recruits before they can join and checks for personality defects, by putting recruits through stress during initial training.

Military service looks great on you resume and if you pick the right job you can get some very valuable training. Look into something that you can do that has a civilian equivalent. There are a lot of good engineering and mechanical related jobs that you can be trained in that will translate into good jobs when you get out of the military.

Bad Points

Very few people get the college money they are promised. The government is not going to give you hundreds of thousands of dollars for college if they can avoid it, so they put many restrictions on it like you have to start within 2 years of leaving the military, you can't change majors (unless enough of your credits apply to the new major), you only get it if you have an honorable discharge, etc. Going to college in the military is not usually an option, because the military is too understaffed to spare service members.

You don't get paid that much during your service. In fact, if you have a wife and a kid and have a college degree, but want the military to pay back the money, you will be under the poverty level and receiving food stamps. You can also get an Article 15 for even very minor infractions, and be penalized with a hundred dollars taken out of your pay check and get a few weeks of extra duty every day.

You might be expected to risk your long term health or life. There is a reason why they send you through a

gas chamber, while you are in basic training in the Army, Marines, and sometimes in the Navy and Air Force and it isn't just a right of passage. The countries the US fights have not signed the Geneva conventions and it is very common for them to torture prisoners and to use chemical weapons. Being exposed to chemical weapons like mustard gas and chlorine is like being burned by battery acid in your lungs and eyes.

Recommend

Realize that the military is very stressful and if you are struggling with psychological issues or are a sensitive person of any kind, joining the military will just exasperate your problems and the military is not set up to do everything for you and take care of things if you can't.

First, consider if joining Americorps or the Peace Corps will satisfy what you are looking for. In Americorps, you help Americans in America, without the high risk of personal injury. You also have many choices on what you can do and who you work for.

Look into joining the Air Force, if at all possible. The Air Force has few of the downsides that the other services have. The one downside to the Air Force is that it is hard to advance very far in rank, because people stay in so long.

Choose the shortest length of service possible. It is very easy to be accepted back into the military for another enlistment, but very hard to get out, while you are still under your tour of duty.

Join the Reserves or Guard first. There are some very interesting jobs that the Reserves and National Guard can do if you are willing to move to another state. If you really enjoy military life, you can very easily change to Regular enlistment, but it is much harder to go the other way around.

When you have joined, always give 150 percent and be a team player all the time and you will avoid 99 percent of the problems most people encounter in the military.

Specifics

If you are considering the Army or the Marines, go play paint ball and go camping with your recruiter; this will give you somewhat of an idea about some of the things you will do in the military.

If you are thinking of joining the Navy, really think carefully what it might be like with a bunch of high school age kids on a little ship in the middle of the ocean. Find out exactly how much space you have and some of the things you might have to do there.

If you have joined in the Delayed Entry Program and have changed your mind, it is very easy to get out and does not count against you in the civilian world or even to the other services. If you show up to your swearing in and shipping date, then it is very hard to get out, until your enlistment is up.

2.2 Transition**2.2.1 College****Going Home**

I am going home today
This home is like a dream
Away in the Army
For just over a year
I feel great excitement
And serious relief
Today is the anniversary
Of when World War 2 ended
I shall never forget today
August 15, 1997
Everything is surreal
And I do not believe
Anything is real
With the awesome release
I feel a failure
I did not serve my full tour
I did not know now

That I was mentally ill
Or that this was why
I was given a discharge
All I knew
Was my eyes burned
And I would have this condition
Indefinitely
I met people from my home church
And I heard of others
Triumphs and failures
I was introduced to a girl on the phone
Who was a few years younger than me
When we talked I realized
I had no hobbies or interests
I don't know how it was for others
But the military life
Did not allow me time for leisure
Or maybe it was just the mind set
That I could never let my guard down
Or ever relax
I was told by my CO
That I should enroll in college
And I did so that fall

Community College

A few days
After I came back
I bought my first computer
I was going to major in business
So I bought a PC
I had saved 5,000 dollars
Of my military income
And I got 10,000 dollars
For college expenses
Because of my service
I realized that I had enough for tuition
But not enough for housing
So I stayed at my parents' house
I did ok in calculus
I excelled in economics

But I had to take accounting
5 times to pass
I missed so many French classes
Because I was using the Internet
With the free hours from AOL
I started out researching my pink eye
But got diverted to finding
A different way to be Christian
Later on I would realize
That the answers lay in the church
I grew up in
Despite those attitudes were the ones
I was trying to escape
I didn't study much
And slept as much as possible
As the pink eye never relented
That summer I took several required
English courses
And started my website
This was the first time
I was introduced to Postmodernism

Community College 2

I tested out of my first year in college
While still in the military
So I started out at Community College
In town as a sophomore
I had even got money from the Army
For college but the biggest financial aid
Came from not counting my parents income
Against me so I could get grants
Grants don't have to be paid back
I had to live at home because I only
Had enough money for school
I started out with a Business Major
I took Calculus and Economics
I had a lot of trouble with Accounting
I took it 5 times before I passed it
I learned about Postmodernism
In my required English class

I hated Business but I was trying
To be practical about my major
I wasn't able to study much
Because I was in so much pain
From the allergic pink eye

University

Not only did I have a Community College
In the town I grew up in
We also had a University
And there are several other colleges there too
Besides my business courses
I took History of Philosophy
And Chinese language course
Both these fell through
For different reasons
The philosophy course required
Weekly papers
And I missed the first
So I had to audit it
As I missed the deadline to withdraw
I stopped going as I thought
Socrates was a smart ass
In my Chinese class
I couldn't learn as fast as they taught
So I had to drop out of it too
But I stayed in my Chinese Literature class
And I really enjoyed it
This is how I was introduced
To Chinese philosophy
That spring I had to find an apartment
And I switched to Linux
Cold turkey
After researching it for 6 months
I was trying to figure out
How to get Microsoft applications
From crashing
So I looked into programming
And all roads led to Linux
That summer I went back

To stay at my parents house
And I took summer courses again
For the credits I missed
During the school year
I took several electives
On was Existentialism
One was about Ecofeminism
I switched my major
To Journalism
Which made much more sense
As I have always been
Good at writing
I took business initially
As my dad recommended it

University 2

The next year I attended the
University in town as a Junior
I continued studying business
I took a Chinese Literature class
As my business breadth requirement
And I enjoyed it immensely
This was my first introduction
To Eastern Philosophy
I also started several other classes
But had to drop out
As I was still in so much pain
From my allergic pink eye
This was about the time
When I started my website
I had to move out that Spring
And lived in a fixed up garage
For a few months
And this was when I first
Installed Linux
After reading about it for 6 months
My motivation was to try to
Fix Microsoft Office so it would
Crash less and all programming roads
Seemed to lead to Linux

I had to attend summer school
As I didn't complete enough courses
I took an Existentialism and an Ecofeminism
Course that summer
As that was all that was left
This was my first introduction to
Existentialism
The end of that summer I worked
At a phone survey company
Previously I had tried selling
Long distance phone service
And doing canvassing for
Our local Public Interest Research Group
I changed my major to Journalism
I took a grammar course
And a graphic design for journalists course
As well as a class in mass media
And a philosophy course about Beauvoir
Someone told me she was the lover
Of Foucault which is not true

2.2.2 Journey

Generations

Like Abraham's call by God
So I believed I was called away
To another land
With my enlistment in the Army
Like Jacob's wrestle with God
I started to fight with God
About why He allows suffering
During college
Like Moses liberating his people
From the land of the Pharaohs
So I was liberating from paranoia
After my stay in a psychiatric ward
Like Joshua leading his people
Into the land of Canaan
So I fought to stay as independent
And rational as possible

Like Israel under Solomon
God blessed my work and I flourished
In my writing and artwork
Then I lived like a prophet
In the wilderness of the retirement home
Fighting for justice
And feeling I lived in the shadow
Of many old people's wrath
Now my desire for justice and freedom
Has been fulfilled with my return
To my own apartment
Like the Israelites came back to the land
After their years of captivity
Under the Assyrians, Babylonians, Persians,
etc.
In my life I have lived many generations
Like being reincarnated
My situation changed each time
And my life was different at each stage

Clarity in Conviction, an Epic Poem

I am a rock crushed and beaten to dust
I am a clay jar wet with rot, pried and pulled
to disfigurement
I am rushed by in shrieking winds of light
I am filled with void and darkness
I stand at the edge of human thought and rea-
son, quivering uncontrollably
I am surrounded on each side
To the right, pain
And to the left, despair
Behind me, fear
And death alone stands before me
All was biting flames and smothering fog
Dancing and laughing sadistically
Drowning in this red hot furnace
I was bound and gagged with pure terror and
relentless pain
Nothing existed but pain and terror
But for a single ray of light immortal

After eternity passed five times
I passed through the iron doors of night impenetrable
Still choking and burning on the rot and char within
Pain and not pain were all that existed
I am part of nothing
And nothing is part of me
Having rejected everything
And everything having rejected me
I am a man, a soldier
And nothing more
And madness did but all consume me
If not for many a labor of love
So once fully alone and silent still
I did let the sun shine in and heal the rot and char
Within the daily fears and petty tribulations that did haunt me
And in the midst of the multitudes busy
Did He, in the humble summer day breeze,
Find I to be wanting and unworthy
So in the cool of the day
With the entire continuum of time and space shuddering
Did my Savior present Himself
As the only worthy sacrifice
Obedient to even death, He did defeat
That which did seek to torment me most eternally
As God raised Jesus from the dead
From there I venture as a simple pilgrim, asking for directions as I go
Finding in the Word He had left me
A map to discern the directions to be trusted from that which should not be
At times outrunning my companions
And at other times standing almost completely still
I find clarity in the conviction of this truth
That God raised Jesus from the dead

And so I go ever on
As He walks humbly by my side
The living flame imperishable walking
To the pace of a mortal man
My companion, my Lord, as my real Father
He who created me is not yet finished
He turns the circle of life, the potter's wheel
To mold my empty and disfigured thoughts into
the pure and noble thoughts of His Son
Making me into the likeness of the real Son of
Man
From the inside out
I am baptized in His Grace, so
That He can make me a new creation
Making me again with fresh clay and water
And filling the emptiness with His love and His
peace
And now my eyes are more fully opened
And I now see the unending power and good-
ness of Christ within me and the truth of
His Word all around me
I am no longer male or female, white or black,
young or old,
But bought at the highest price and no longer
my own
I now call myself after my master, Christian
He that I may serve and in so doing be free
from my most eternal enemy, myself
And as the road goes ever on and on,
And I stumble along the way, from time to time
And as I return to the foot of the cross each
day
And learn again why I cannot master myself
And I realize each time more and more
How amazing was that grace that saved a wretch
like me

Spirits Follow

Alone in a crowd
All cramped in a tiny room

Locked in from without
All I could see is red
Shivering in torment
Like a doomed soul
Baptized in hellfire
Will they ever let me out?
Alone in my bed
All warm and well fed
A dark cloud rises from the vents
And shakes the window
My soul shivers
And I lay motionless
A wicked voice whispers
My worst fears
There is a danger that is greater than death
There is a fear greater than going mad
There are times when you wish you could hide
Under the shadow of the Lord
There is a way that you could escape
If you locate your enemy
Left hand betraying the right
Your heart revealed secrets to your mind
A dislocated soul
And a warped spiritual dimension
What sword can penetrate to the heart
Dividing the bone from the marrow?
Fighting for peace
Is a delicate struggle
When your home is booby trapped
And your foe looks like your friend
Nothing is sacred
And you are never really alone

After All These Years

The fight is still in me
And I still remember
Dreams of success
Adventure and excitement
What is easy to forget
Is the training

The pain and the struggle
To build strength of mind and body
I still focus on the result
But the process is equally important
A soldier struggles in each task
Of his necessary skills
The most important ones
Are the least glamorous
The hardest ones
He forgets easiest
The ones he never did
Are recalled most often
I can imagine parachuting
Over hostile territory
But the voice of the drill sergeant
Continues to fade over time
My protective mask
Is not my greatest defense
Now I rely on freedom of religion
And the uselessness of my work
I am still a soldier
But my pictures are my rifle
And my words are my bayonet
I am determined to build my body
To the level of my mind
But I now know
That it is equally hard
As the piles of books
I struggled to understand
There will be years of work
And I will fail for most of it
But one day
Everything will come together
And I will be stronger
To face my greatest enemy
My paranoid mind
And deluded consciousness

The Forest

My time in the forest was predestined

There was a reason for my forest years
But I was not cheated
And was not a victim of a petty game
The forest is a time of building character
And learning life lessons
I learned new ways to fight
I found weapons more powerful than a pen
The forest is filled with trials and traps
Mine were paranoid and obsessive compulsive
I feared things that are irrational
And was obsessed with the least important
I learned that play is as important as work
And that relationships with people are as important as ideas
I learned that I can survive things
Most people will never have to go through
The only way to learn is trial by fire
And the only way to live is with wisdom
God watches over me
As I am one of His children
And is ever ready especially in the deep forest
When it is common for the details to be violent
To help my character
As He writes the story of my life
With special powers I can do more good
The special power I want is to be normal
But unlike the epic hero
My forest journey is always with me
Because it is a part of who I am
And I am willing to go the distance
With my tribulations
If I can learn from each challenge
So that I suffer less each time

2.3 Having Schizophrenia

2.3.1 Introduction

Dealing with Paranoid Schizophrenia

Schizophrenia is a disease that encompasses a wide

range of different problems, like the disease Cancer. Not all people with Schizophrenia hear voices or have paranoia. Paranoid Schizophrenia is the worst, by far.

Schizophrenia is caused by a stressful event, which is most often caused by the military, but only in people who have a genetic predisposition to the disease, which is hereditary, occurring usually only once in a generation. Drugs do not cause Schizophrenia, but can make it worse and harder to diagnose. Schizophrenia is caused by the brain not developing normally in adolescents. It affects the frontal lobe which is responsible for fear, anger, and other primordial emotions.

Men usually get diagnosed in their 20s and women in their 30s. The illness is generally not caught until there is a paranoid episode and medicine is usually not started until a (non-violent) crime is committed, as it is hard for a person to accept that they are out of their mind. Staying on the medicine regularly is the key to living a semi normal life. 1/3 of people with Schizophrenia just stare at a wall all day, one third are semi-independent, and 1/3 are almost fully independent.

There is a similar disorder that is less disabling called Schizoaffective disorder and people who have this disorder are often under the false impression that they have Schizophrenia plus Mania or Depression, and that they have a tougher time than people who "just" have Schizophrenia. This is not true. Schizophrenia as a whole is much more severe than Schizoaffective disorder and Paranoid Schizophrenia is the most disabling mental illness, by a long shot.

Many people also are difficult to diagnose, because they have taken drugs before to self medicate. Also, many psychologists or counselor diagnose people and often give incorrect labels, because they are not qualified to diagnose. To diagnose, you must be a psychiatrist, not a psychologist.

A psychologist or counselor may have anywhere between a one year certificate to a doctorate in psychology. Most have a bachelors or a masters degree. A psychiatrist has a full doctorate in medicine, plus a doctorate in psychology, plus an internship, etc. Most psychologists have

no training in mental illness at all.

I have Paranoid Schizophrenia and that is what 3 independent psychiatrists diagnosed me with, all whose interest would be best served if they didn't diagnose me. Those who diagnosed me were: the admitting psychiatrist for a mental ward of a local private hospital, one working for the Social Security Administration and one working for the Veterans Administration. It cost them all a lot of money for their organizations to diagnose me, so my case is very well founded. Also, no one who was qualified to diagnose me ever thought I could have any disorder other than Paranoid Schizophrenia and I have never been diagnosed as anything else.

The first thing to get started, after being diagnosed with any major mental illness, is the medicine. This is even more true for Schizophrenia. There is no cure yet for Schizophrenia and it cannot be treated effectively by religion, diet, herbs, meditation or counseling alone or in combination. The primary treatment for Schizophrenia is a tranquilizer (also known as a sedative). The discovery was made in the early 50s that tranquilizers would blunt the voices, delusions, and paranoia.

Many people do not want to take the medicine, because of the negative side effects. This medicine causes tremendous and rapid weight gain almost always, as it numbs the nerves in the stomach, so you never feel full no matter how much you eat. Many people feel less creative with the medicine and feel that it is given just to get the person to follow orders better. The medicine can also cause diabetes, due to the high weight gain. The medicine also make people very tired and that is why many people who have Schizophrenia drink large amounts of coffee and other caffeinated beverages and smoke cigarettes.

There are some other common symptoms to Schizophrenia, that the experts have not been able to pin down to the illness or the medicine. These symptoms include: depression, lack of motivation, difficulty concentrating, difficulty with short term memory, lack of appropriate facial expressions, lack of emotion, etc. These are the most disabling aspects of Schizophrenia, for most people.

The other negative aspect is that most people with

Schizophrenia receive money from Social Security Administration, which is much less than minimum wage and so they are often the victims of crime. It is also hard for people with Schizophrenia to make friends. Although it is common that someone is not treated, until they commit a minor crime like vandalism or stealing, people with Schizophrenia are not any more likely to commit violent crimes than anyone else. I have never committed any crimes.

Although medicine is the primary treatment, secondary treatments help with some of the other symptoms that are often the most disabling for people living with Schizophrenia. Some of these secondary treatments include revealed religions, especially Christianity, as it offers the most comfort and has the least amount of obligations of these religions. Counseling can be helpful, especially as obsessive compulsive behaviors/addictions are common with people who have a mental illness. I have never taken any drugs. Another good secondary treatment is to find a hobby or something constructive to do. Some people, who have Schizophrenia, can work a part time job.

2.3.2 Breakdown

Jesus Won Paranoid Episode

I had been having some problems with spiritual warfare. I had written some stories that I merged my life with Middle Earth. I accidentally put myself under a Witchcraft spell. I walked out of my house that day with my Army jacket. I was ready for warfare. I rushed around downtown. I dropped off my books, that were loading me down in my pack, by the side of the street and an angel flew off with it. I went to the Church and knelt down before the crucifix and prayed to God to spare me. I took my web site off line with the offensive material. I saw "Jesus loves you" engraved in the side of the street that I didn't see before or afterwards. I saw a double rainbow when I went home.

I made an altar out of our fireplace. I piled in it all my Buddhist, Feminist, and Atheistic books and lit it on

fire. I kept loading books in for several hours. Some that I was unsure about I took to the fire place and, if they survived the flames, I kept them. I tore down the Buddhist goddess of mercy down from the wall and our black cat meowed out side. He was in cohorts with the Devil. I threw in the plastic snake in the fire and commanded evil out in Jesus name and turned my back to the altar. I laid on my bed and weeped for the suffering of the Church during the tribulation. I saw a vision of Star Trek as the future. I started singing "Joy to the World" as my eyes were moisturized with my tears. My eyes had hurt for 3 1/2 years before. They needed the salt they weren't getting from flushing them out several times a day for that time. I looked down at my Bible. It was the Parallel New Testament. We were in a parallel time kept that way by people making the Bible into too many versions.

My parents put out the food for the homeless for the postman to deliver. They spoke to me in code that I was the homeless person this Christmas. I walked out of the house when my parents left. I stood on the porch walking back and forth. The radio dial spun out of control. Many years now went by.

I stood on the porch, until my parents came back. I saw them come back with the dog. I had to decide whether I was going to go out and marry my friend's sister or go down to the Church to pray. I looked at my bank receipt and then put it in my pocket. I knew when I took it out again there would be enough for my marriage. I headed down the grocery store to buy a paper and look for a job. The paper had on it the story of how the world fell apart.

Only Eugene and Springfield were left. On the front page, they said we decided not to hire you (I had been interning down at the Comic News). I went down to the corner and saw the number to the Comic News on a sign. I tried to hang myself on the sign. I was unworthy.

I saw the parents of my friend whose sister I was going to marry aged years and they drove off angrily when they saw me. I should have gone down to marry her. I walked along the sidewalk. I knew I couldn't go back home. Everyone had banned Christians from their houses. I looked for a sign. I picked up a wooden sign that said

"777 indoor sale". It was a secret code. I covered up the Bible so the devil didn't know about the parallel time as I walked along. I got on the bus. I shared to them that I was a Christian and I was kicked off the bus with a scornful look.

I saw the devil car pass by, all red with antenna on the top, like horns. I turned aside and continued quickly. I continued up to the church. I stopped, where two ladies were talking. All men were now kicked out of their houses. The world was controlled by radical feminists. I asked them, if I could go in where it was warm. I told them I was the prostitute. I asked if they were Christians. One lady tried to trick me into thinking that I should go to Eugene to the Mission. The other who was Christian told me there was a Bible study at the Church. It was the only one left. The other church had slipped into just doing good works and lost their faith. I came to the Church and I started to read my Bible.

I sat with my back to the world so no one could see the Bible. I picked a version and read it all the way through the book of John. It sounded a lot like Revelations. I was going to wait 3 1/2 years feeding off the Bible for food. I would have to wait for my sister as the only other Christian on earth. As I prayed I turned and saw the sky change color and sunlight came out and I was warm.

I was happy once I finished reading the Bible and knew things were ok. Everyone was racing into the city as they had been racing out before. Everyone was relieved. God played jokes on me with the signs to relax me. I was too tense. As I walked by now with the wooden sign up for everyone to see I smiled and yelled out "777 Jesus won". A motorcycle gang fled from me as I walked by with the police following them. The same police I heard before.

I returned to the store and picked up a copy of the newspaper. I showed a woman everything happened like in the paper. I also offered one to one of the bikers. I went back home and picked up the mail. All the letters were filled with the number 7. I went down to my friends house and dropped off the newspaper and the jam for the homeless person. I was accepted into the American Legion. As I walked down Main Street I noticed that the wind had

blown away large clumps of trees and trash. The city was being cleaned up and there were red bows on all the city for me. I was welcome at any hotel.

I saw my parents and they picked me up.

Poetry

My Breakdown

At the end of the winter semester
I had an emotional breakdown
I thought I was dealing
With spiritual warfare
I tore up my copy of the Second Sex
And I burned a bunch of my books
I thought I was a prophet
And ended up in the local
Private hospital's mental ward
I tried to take courses that Spring
After I was released for several months
In programming and social science
But that didn't work out
I started reading philosophy again
Starting with Existentialism
And Zen Buddhism
Along the way
I spent about a year in a group home
With 8 other mentally ill men
I spent a couple years in a retirement home
And had in home care a number of years
I now am completely independent

Descent into Madness I now know the horrors exist
That are worse than we can imagine
I am now in constant pain
I carry in my eyes the unquenchable fire
The one that never stops burning
I am injured beyond repair
But my country says its not that bad
I cannot study for long
Nor can I concentrate

I manage to pass enough classes
By learning quickly and a good memory
I try to meet others
But I am too tired to extend myself
No one will hire me
Except for a phone survey place
I cannot work with chemicals
My eyes burn even worse in their presence
My paranoia continues to grow
I think I am growing a third eye
Spiritual warfare seems to make sense
But I end up in the hospital
And the doors lock behind me
I am now in Hell again
But only my mind burns
I cannot escape
But time passes by more quickly
I move out to the outside room
And am allowed to have some freedom
I go home
And continue to sleep for long time periods
I struggle to get on my own
And get acknowledged that I am ill
I struggle to read again
And am finally able to write again

Schizophrenia

When school let out that winter
I thought I was wrestling with
Spiritual warfare
But as I found myself
In the mental ward of a local hospital
I knew I was having emotional problems
I didn't know until a month later
That I had Schizophrenia
My parents came to see my all day long
But I only remember them
Coming in the evening
I was explaining trigonometry
We were all afraid of one of the guys

He was big and not very nice
And he controlled the TV
I remember how excited we got
When we realized we could order
More than one of the food items
To one of the residents
My pastor came to see me
And said he could get me out
I knew better for some reason
I was so excited to leave the first room
Which they called Hell
And to go out into the next area
In the hospital ward
I remember we got to do
Group activities there
One guy showed me how to dance
I was hyper-religious
According to my psychiatrist
Who kept asking me if I heard voices
He didn't introduce himself
So it was a few days later
Before I realized he was my doctor
I remember how hard it was to sleep
The dementia patients next door
Kept screaming all night
To get out
I had to under go an MRI
Which was very scary for me
But my mom was there for me
And I was given a mirror
So I could see out
When I left the hospital
I watched TV most of the day
And I slept a lot too
I finally decided to read and write
Which was very difficult at first
I was only able to
Write after 4 months
It was hard for me
To even ride across town
At first

I remember when I got back
From the hospital
I threw out
Everything sharp in my room
I was afraid to be alone
For several months
I started attending
A local recreation group
For the mentally ill
I also worked on learning Javascript
And eventually started
On my website again

Total Isolation

When you are committed
Even when voluntarily
There is no escape
From the terror
Your days pass by
With hours of no memory
The pain takes weeks
To lessen noticeably
You must stay in Hell
And there is no quick way out
You are not informed of your rights
But it would not matter
You still could never understand
You are not in your right mind
The doctor controls your fate
You can be sent to the state hospital
And never be released
Or get out in a couple weeks
You have no choice
What really scares you
Are others like yourself
You are all in the same boat
You cannot get out
Until you are scanned
You are crammed into
A small tunnel

And you cannot leave
Until they are done
You cannot see out
And they cannot give you
Enough tranquilizers to calm you
You want to return to normal
But you cannot work
For at least a year
Or you will never get
Your state pension
You have to wait another year
For low income housing
If you are lucky
You have family
Who can and will take you in
And who will do your paperwork
None of it starts until
You know about it and register
If you live on the street
You are stuck being homeless
And there is little hope
Of being able to get out

Group Home

That fall I entered
A group home
I shared the house
With 8 other men
With mental illnesses
And there was a staff person
There at all times
They basically ignored us
We had to clean and cook
All by ourselves
There was no help in this
They just required that we did this
The TV was always on VH1
And we had to leave the house
For at least 1 hour at 11am
I started volunteering

At a local Internet Service Provider
Doing tech support
I also volunteered at a local music hall
Taking tickets and checking IDs
We had to be in
By a certain time each night
And had to stay inside until
A certain time in the morning
They wouldn't let me go to bed
Before a certain time
And I had to get up by a certain time
The reason why I was here
Was because I started out with only
200 and some dollars a month
From the state agency
And this was the only place that would take
me
I visited my mom once a week
She was on the other side of town
And I got 20 dollars a week from her
Which I spent mostly on books
I kept writing poetry and reading
Mostly about Buddhism at this point
And I continued to work on the website
I started on a new medicine
Which made me less tired
When I was on the previous medicine
If I didn't fight to stay awake
I would always be asleep
Then my money came in
From the Veterans
And I moved into my own apartment

2.3.3 Limitations

Articles

What is it like? What is it like to not have control of your mind - to lay awake at night afraid of things that will never happen - to believe that your loved ones are against you - to not know the difference between what

is fact and what is fiction - to fear the police will arrest you for how you were born - to not be able to handle the stress of meetings - to not be able to be consistently on time - to not be able to sit through a play or a movie - to find it stressful to listen to music - to not have the motivation to take care of yourself - to have to rely on others for your income?

Thought Control I am very self-reflective and find meaning in every part of life. But I am not just a philosopher because many of my thoughts are not rational and I do not have control over my thoughts. I keep busy to distract myself from voices and paranoia. Quiet times like when I fall asleep at night are when my paranoia and voices are the most intense. When someone makes a comment in general and it could apply to me, I take it as a personal attack as I am suspicious that others are against me. It is impossible for me to still my mind enough to meditate.

Daily Activities Not only do I not have control over my thoughts, but I find it impossible to take care of the daily activities that are necessary to survive in the modern world. I understand technology, philosophy, and can write and draw on a level that few can surpass, but I can't wash my clothes once a week, clean my bathroom, recycle, or show up at a set time. The modern world is based on the clock and on facts and that is how we deal with other people in our society. This is completely foreign to my way of thinking.

Responses I developed my own subculture, as I was unable to find my place in society. Basically, I have to find time to rest in order to deal with my illness, to avoid going back to the hospital. But even the rest can cause me mental pain: paranoia and auditory hallucinations. It would be good for me to have more interactions with people, as they help bring me into the modern world, but they also cause me a great deal of paranoia and many things they carelessly say cause me to suffer mentally.

Schizophrenia This is the situation I am in, and modern science calls it Schizophrenia. I am very intelligent and good at writing and being creative, but this has nothing to do with Schizophrenia. Is a person with diabetes any different except for their illness? I am no different in that way too. I know many other people who have Schizophrenia and they are no more or less intelligent or think differently than anybody else.

Schizophrenia is a broad term like cancer where many different illnesses fall under the same umbrella. Some people with Schizophrenia can complete distance education or work a part time job, but I cannot. My main obstacle is dealing with time and facts - dealing with other people and taking care of my basic needs.

Why Cows? Cows have been abused throughout history for labor, meat, milk, leather, and manure. The related words in Chinese are "jail" and "complain."

Discrimination of the Mentally Ill I identify with cows because I am mentally ill. The mentally ill have been the most targeted group of people for persecution, discrimination, marginalization, segregation, isolation, and more. Even as late as the 50's people were locked up for being mentally ill and even today they still receive electroshock therapy against their will.

Personal Discrimination I have been denied several volunteer jobs because they knew I was mentally ill although definitely qualified and have no criminal record nor have ever been institutionalized, I have not received federally mandated equal access to education which my only request that required effort from the instructor was oral test or test by paper, I have not been given a case worker because the county did not have any more available although I qualified, as a veteran I still have to travel hundreds of miles for dental treatment and have to pay for many medical expenses upfront, and to even get my disability I had to wait a year and a half which is not uncommon which if I worked in that time I would be dis-

qualified, and I was not told about services available in my community and had to find them on my own.

Son of Strength I have developed the idea of raising the bar, once I reach the level that was once my goal, for a higher goal and then on and on until I die. I think I reached rock bottom recently. I have developed the ability to understand philosophy despite having Schizophrenia and with it the near impossibility of understanding abstract thought.

Based on this insight, I surmised that I could do the same thing with my physical body. I would strengthen my will to the point that I could force my body to do what it couldn't physically much as Special Forces do. The problem is that in the Special Forces, when the training is done, that at some point the service member gets to rest. They don't tire out the service members to the point that they have no energy, before they drop them onto classified missions.

So for me to assume that I could will myself into mastering my body is a flawed assertion at best. But that was very arrogant to assume that I could reach that level of intensity, without having even attempting that kind of training. Anyway, when I came back from my run, which I was able to push myself past more pain than I was able to do in any of my cross country running, I tasted blood in my lungs and at the point when I got back to my retirement center, one of the managers thought I was having a heart attack.

This showed me that I need to slow down and be aware that although I can dream of saving the world, I do not have the energy to. In addition to never being able to feel fully rested no matter how much sleep I have had, I can't push past it with greater mental strength, as I don't even have the control over my mind as a normal person does. What the Apostle Paul said in Romans is at the heart of (Christian) Existentialism. We cannot do what we want to. We are not strong enough mentally to reach our goals. We must leave saving the world to God and just help in small ways or else we will not survive long enough

to see the fruits of our efforts.

I have finally realized that having Schizophrenia is not just a mental illness; it is a physical one as well. If your medicine is being effective on giving you some control of your thoughts, then you will have no energy to do anything.

I have recently arrived at the conclusion that the increased suffering of the world recently is the direct fault of Christians not following what God has called them to do, and in response to the fact and because I am in the wealthiest nation on the earth and because of my gifts of intelligence and creativity that I should be able to make a measurable dent in the amount of suffering that the sentient beings of the earth must feel. But the problem is I don't have the strength to have the reach that I believe I should have. Many of the problems of the world, if they are to be solved by people, need more resources than I have been given. I will just have to accept that there is some reason that God is allowing this to happen by conscious choice alone.

I have had to struggle with whether to say I believe that God raised Jesus from the dead and that he was both man and God or that that is a fact. I have recently come to understand that belief is stronger than facts. Similarly to how I said when we had to mark opinion as false and fact as true that opinions could be truths but facts are not consequential enough to be truths. So it shows more certainty to say that I believe in Heaven and Hell than to say flatly that there is a Heaven and Hell and that is the truth whether you agree with it or not you will go to one, because of course its true to the limits of my knowledge which is all I can guarantee by saying it is the truth, but to say I believe something to be true means that I haven't just proved it intellectually, but it is so true that I risk eternity on it.

Poetry

Frustration

Struggling to lift the heavy lids

My eyes burst open
And I stagger to the other room
With immense effort
I live in a dream within a dream
My paranoia within God's thoughts
My will is strong
And my spirit unbreakable
But my mind only controls
Some of my thoughts
And my body is weak
And continually asleep
My burden is not light
As Jesus said for those
Who walk with Him
And its shadow is ever before me
When your mind cannot cease
From racing at full speed
And your body is heavily sedated
Everything is a battle of will
And your spirit pushes your body
My heart is pressed on all sides
By my unquenchable emotions
And unmovable flesh
But my heart is still wild and unwavering
How will I complete the contest?
How many years will this situation last?
When you are dead tired
And you are nowhere near the finish
You must slow down and keep going
When you would much rather lie down and die
How will I summon the energy
Without the strength of mind or body?
Will I be able to survive by spirit alone?
Do I know how to achieve solely by will?
Each day we wake up and begin
Before even thinking about "what next?"
But at night we worry over
What has and hasn't happened
If only my spirit could know the rhythm
And my will the attitude
That can harmonize with the Way

And outlast the disease
We can only hope
And pray without ceasing

Naked Mind

Like a devout monk
My mind operates
In transparency and nakedness
As there are no obstructions
Between me and my feelings
For others they see life
Through filters
To keep their minds
From every emotion
That flies by
For me I am naked
And there is not
Even a thin white robe
Between me
And the thoughts
That race by
I feel deeply about injustice
And people hurting others
For any reason
I struggle to be balanced
And to keep my mind clear
Of the paranoid conclusions
My mind makes from
Reflection on the situation
I have to guard my mind consciously
As the normal controls and safeguards
Are not present

2.3.4 Religion

Frustration

Struggling to lift the heavy lids
My eyes burst open
And I stagger to the other room

With immense effort
I live in a dream within a dream
My paranoia within God's thoughts
My will is strong
And my spirit unbreakable
But my mind only controls
Some of my thoughts
And my body is weak
And continually asleep
My burden is not light
As Jesus said for those
Who walk with Him
And its shadow is ever before me
When your mind cannot cease
From racing at full speed
And your body is heavily sedated
Everything is a battle of will
And your spirit pushes your body
My heart is pressed on all sides
By my unquenchable emotions
And unmovable flesh
But my heart is still wild and unwavering
How will I complete the contest?
How many years will this situation last?
When you are dead tired
And you are nowhere near the finish
You must slow down and keep going
When you would much rather lie down and die
How will I summon the energy
Without the strength of mind or body
Will I be able to survive by spirit alone?
Do I know how to achieve solely by will?
Each day we wake up and begin
Before even thinking "what next?"
But at night we worry over
What has and hasn't happened
If only my spirit could know the rhythm
And my will the attitude
That can harmonize with the Way
And outlast this disease
We can only hope

And pray without ceasing

FAQs

Is there an effective treatment of Schizophrenia without medication? Schizophrenia was not treated effectively by society until anti-psychotic drugs were created from sedatives in the late 1950's. The medication has been modified to remove most of the sedating attributes by the first part of the 21st century, so that many people with Schizophrenia are able to live outside institutions. Anti-psychotic medications are able to blunt the effects of paranoia, delusions, and hallucinations enough, so that people can distinguish between them and reality. But there is not a medication that will completely eliminate those symptoms or the lethargy that comes either from the mental illness or as a side effect of the medication. To help deal with remaining symptoms, religion in moderation can be helpful. Religion can provide stability, answers, and useful ideas for secondary treatments.

Why is religion rejected by psychologists in their treating mental illness? Many hallucinations, paranoid thoughts, and delusions have religious components to them and sometimes the rituals of religion can contribute to Obsessive Compulsive behaviors. This shows that there is a relationship between religion and mental illness, but it doesn't mean that religion in all its aspects does nothing but hinder the treatment of Schizophrenia.

Can an atheist apply ideas from religion into their treatment? One of the reasons why I incorporate Chinese philosophy into my treatment of Schizophrenia, is because although the Bible tells a person how to live ethically and how to have an appropriate relationship with God, it doesn't tell you everything you ever need to know. Not all problems are entirely spiritually based. A person can definitely learn how to think rationally without using the Bible, but to get the full comfort from religion, faith is a vital component.

2.3.5 Counseling

The Appointment, an Epic Poem

Waiting

I walk in and sit down
I am there a half hour early
I pull out my magazine
I finish it in ten minutes
I began to think
My mind starts to wander off
How will I interpret the psy babble?
How will I stupefy my ideas?
I keep looking up
As I hear what could be sounds
Will he repeat the same ideas again
Or will I get some gem of useful thinking?
A calm passes over me
I can survive without him
The room is cool
And it is bright outside
What a nice day
It took me an hour to get here
I had to take the bus
Then walk a half a mile
It is always easy to think on the bus
When people aren't making annoying sounds
And walking always makes me feel good
At first, before I start questioning my every
 action
Last night it took a while to fall asleep
But it was early when I laid down
I woke up early and still felt tired
The sun wasn't even out yet
I watched some news
I looked up - I missed the sunrise
I remember now about my chi
I wonder if he will like that
It must seem strange to a doctor
How people could know so much before science
How they used food for medicine

How doctors eventually became politicians
And how complex the diagnosis could be
When everything boiled down to either yin or
yang

Preparation

Good - he's not in the office yet
Don't need another one of those
So much paper work
I wonder if I really need to give him this test
Like I'm going to come up with a different diagnosis
I wish I could get this damn computer to work
I guess I'll have to call the maintenance guy
tonight
No test today, I guess
Is my tie straight?
He probably doesn't even care
Where is my coffee?
I guess I'll have to call up my receptionist
Bring me up my cappuccino!
Thanks
Will I take wifey out to the opera tonight?
I hope I still have the tickets
She probably already found them
And has bought a new dress for it
I can finally sit down
Gee that was a long weekend
Why does my daughter always ask for money
Right at first?
I wonder what job she will get with a major in
dance
And when will she actually start
She is going to be 25 before she starts again
At this rate
I forgot to polish my shoes
Not again!
I hope I get some wealthy clients
When I can only charge them 100 an hour
I can barely pay for my SUV

And second home on the beach
I think I hear the client
I should greet him
No, that would be unprofessional
Come in, now
I'm ready to see you

Hot and Cold

Like the crests of the ocean waves
My emotions rose and fell
As he tried to comprehend my ideas
And I sought to apply his suggestions
Like the calm of the lake
I kept an inner confidence
Not merely a master of intellectual wit
But one who has the benefit of powerful experiences
Like a river high in the mountains
I am always near my source
Speaking rapidly and in sudden bursts
I exude a passion for my case
Like a salmon tasting sea water for the first time
I interpret my background in new ways
Each sentence never spoken before
Each thought given a new life
And each idea connected differently
Than even the session before
Like the taste of French fries
The conversation had a familiar flavor
Addictive and satisfying
There was a depth opened up by a true desire
The darkness clear as day
By the light of knowledge
And a peace illuminated
The mystery of the night
For in the middle of my winter
I burned inside like an ember
Like the heat of the midday sun
Blood hot and palms sweaty

This was another time
Where I was really there
In the heat of the conversation
From my heart came laughter
And I was truly happy
A cold resilience
And a warm character
Both analytical and creative
I seemed unsure of which direction
Should I go
A deep set fear and a hearty laugh
Each aspect showed up the other

Black and White

My voice soft and child like
My inexperience showed through
Like my bright blue bow tie
And my beaming smile
I was outspoken and competent
But inside I felt too soft and easily swayed
I try hard to not be self-conscious
To be nothing if not proud
Of my pear shaped figure
And my big feet
Black and white
Red and blue
I am consoling yet firm
Sympathetic yet bold
What am I to make
Of this deafening quiet
And silent screams
With each word I say
He expands to a paragraph
With each inflection of my voice
His mind is stirred
He is interesting and dynamic
Trapped yet freeing others
What can I say
To one who already has the answers?
If he could just listen to himself

And remember my main point
That it is not a race for an answer
But rather a way of sitting
Not a method of thinking
But a way of seeing
A new twist on his broad background
An open window into his soul
A silence in his racing mind
A soft touch with a strong hand
Something to blend the fire and water
That consumes his heart and mind

Other Poetry

Taming the Mind

Waves lap at the edge of my mind
The interior is a vast expanse of sand
Torn by raging waters
And rugged mountain peaks
It is anything but calm
This is not the sound of silence
Messages fly like carrier pigeons
Familiar with the terrain
The ravens out fly the pigeons
The buzzards peck at the fallen ones
Overgrown brush covers the mountains
And the ocean is covered in algae
Voices from far away echo off the mountains
Voices from within get muffled by the vegetation
Dark clouds cover the sky
And settle down like a mist over the rivers
Lightning bolts across the sky
And knocks the ravens dead in their tracks
Stunned, they fall below
And become entangled in the flora
A thought travels across the expanse
Self awareness occurs
Swift and majestic an eagle soars
Crying out thoughts from the heart

The mist lifts and little villages become visible
The people burn back the overgrowth
Fish team up in the ocean and finish off the
algae
The waves subside and gently rock the fisher-
men's boats
The people build roads that connect the vil-
lages
They send out horses to hurry the mail along
Farms now occupy the land where there once
was desert
The rivers are directed to irrigate the land
The natural chaos is contained and settled
There is freedom from random deaths
Each thought now travels in a caravan
With guards patrolling all sides
The eagles still patrol the skies
And the buzzards clean up the fallen ravens
The inhabitants for now have tamed the land
But whenever the sky becomes dark
They remember what it was like to be isolated
and alone

Heaven and Earth

There is a rhythm that exists
Deep inside your spirit
When all you hear is breathing
And your mind is all alone
Thoughts take flight
And you see nothing
Returning the power to Heaven
And the ten thousand things
Follow your mind
Liberation is a subtlety
And freedom comes from control
The hierarchy reflects nature
And the order is transparent
Within an instant
Everything fades away
The mind is ruler

And the body follows
When the mind is empty
The body is fully alert
With each breath
Heaven takes more territory
And the Earth longs
For heaven's leadership
A unity exists
When Heaven is patriarch
And his rule is sage-like
And shows perspective
The Way leads to your heart
And is illuminated by your breath
Heaven leads the Way
And each member settles in
For a long peace
And a stable rule
The Way is narrow
When your mind is a casualty of war
It broadens
As Heaven is seated on your throne

My Experiences with the Mental Health Establishment

Not a Good Day June 6th, 2006

Today was not a good day. I was the victim of an abusive mental health worker. I have experienced the same thing, with many other people, who work with the mentally ill. They assume that they are always right and the consumer is always wrong. I continue to have to hold my tongue and not say how I feel out of fear of retaliation, but they say whatever they feel like, regardless of my feelings and no one stands up for me. The workers bring up very divisive topics, like politics and religion, and usually say some very negative things about Christianity. Then, when I try to respond, they say I can't talk about religion or politics. Basically, they are saying only their opinion counts. What I believe is not important, because I was born different than them. I was even told by one of the managers that I know more about mental illness than

they do.

Typical Conversation "What is Buddhism all about?"

Aside: I only have time for a one sentence answer, but I won't communicate that to you

"Well, first of all, Buddhism is a form of atheism and is nihilistic. In Buddhism all deities are illusions and..."

Aside: Why are they giving me a blank stare? They must not comprehend, but are unwilling to ask the needed question.

"I need help with my VCR; you are good with computers" Aside: I don't understand him but I don't want to look stupid, so I am just going to cut him off, in mid-sentence.

"Actually I don't know much about VCRs. What is your problem?"

"I can't get the TV back on."

"Just hit the input button or tv/video button several times, until you see the TV show."

"I don't know how to do that." Aside: I am not really listening to you because I don't want to learn how to do anything new. I would rather depend on other people, to fix my problems for me.

"I can hit the button for you then, but watch so you can do it next time." Aside: I just explained it to you. I guess you weren't even listening.

"I am so busy with work that I need you to do that for me, but I won't be around." Aside: I have no intention of doing that. That would be learning and that scares me.

"Ok." Aside: I wonder what she does at work. All I see her do is talk to the her co-workers and play games on the computer

Resolution I am no longer going to answer any questions about philosophy to anyone who hasn't first read through Philosophy Core curriculum and answered the questions at the end. Then after looking at the answers, I can tell if they are serious about studying philosophy. Then I will have them read books from the Recommended Reading List and I will answer questions about the books,

only after they have read them. The Philosophy Core is based on my reading from 165 mostly classical philosophical texts and my conversations with people of various levels of education over a period of 7 years. I have finally simplified and explained it to the point, that if a person cannot understand it, they are most likely not making the effort, second most likely, they need to learn how to read better, or else they don't have the ability (the third possibility is very rare).

Chapter 3

Book of Psychology

by Ben Huot

3.1 Personal Psychological Issues

3.1.1 My Biggest Flaws

Negative Effects

I just had an insight tonight that the source of most the things that bother me and stress me out are based on two aspects of my personality: I am both impatient and a perfectionist, but not in just the ordinary sense - I take these to the utmost extremes. The most likely cause of being a perfectionist comes from my experiences in the military and my impatience is related to my mental illness. One of the reasons why it took me so long to figure this out is because I can easily get into an endless loop trying to deal with these problems, especially if I think I need to do it all right away and perfectly.

Positive Effects

I think some of the positive side effects of my biggest flaws are that I am very disciplined and passionate about whatever I set my mind to. I never do anything part way or put something important off to the next day. Another things that drives me even further into this mode of thinking is that I believe that society will likely fall apart soon and the people I meet on a daily basis are so lazy and apathetic.

3.1.2 How the Army Changed Me

My Life Started Over

The Army changed my life, so much, that I consider my life to have started over again, when I joined the military. Serving in the Army changed my perspective on life. I became much more serious, risk adverse, confident, paid more attention to detail, learned about the importance of the labor movement, decided I never wanted to be a leader, and I learned more about the way the world worked.

Never Could Relax

The military was not all bad, but I was constantly under tremendous stress, as I never got enough sleep, during training and I never felt I could relax. The military has much higher standards, than the rest of the world. They perform duties that, if done wrong, kill a great number of people.

Results of Losing Wars

Losing wars is a big deal and the US can lose its position, as a superpower, partially, by losing wars. Europe has had to join together, to compete with the US, Brazil, Russia, India, China, and Japan, because of almost destroying itself, in two world wars and then a decades long cold war.

The Gas Chamber

After I joined the military, I realized that I was taking a bigger risk than I had previously known. I wasn't afraid of dying or of bullets, but I was scared of the idea of being burned alive, which is very common nowadays. We all had to go through a gas chamber, with very highly concentrated and higher strength tear gas and then take our protective masks off, for 5 minutes, while in there. It felt to me like my eyes and lungs were on fire and I was drowning in fire. It is one of the most painful experiences I have had.

Contemporary Use of Chemical Weapons

I had asked my recruiter specifically about poison gas and if it was commonly used against us, but he said that no one uses it now. He was an Army Ranger, so he knew enough to know that wasn't true. It is true that chemical weapons are banned in warfare, by the Geneva Conventions, but the governments we fight wars against almost always have either never signed the Geneva Conventions, or if they have, they have no intention of following them.

Protection from Chemical Weapons

During both Iraqi wars, the military was sure they would be gassed, even though they had taken some extreme tactics, to keep them from happening. The protective gear is not very sophisticated, but it does work, if sealed up properly, against a number of different poisonous gases. We are trained in this, in Basic Training, as well as, how to administer shots, to counter the effects, of nerve agents. The real money is spent on very sophisticated sensors.

Avoiding Chemical Weapons Use

During the first war in Iraq, the president communicated to the Iraqi leadership, that it would use nukes, against Iraq, if it used poisonous gas, on US troops. During the second war, special agents went in beforehand and found the leaders responsible, for releasing chemical weapons, and told them they would be leaders in the new government, if they didn't release the poisonous gas, but if they did, they would be tried for war crimes.

Military Legal System

The laws are much more severe in the military. For example, you can go to prison, for committing adultery and be killed, for raping someone. You also get in trouble, with the local laws, in the place, where you committed the crime, as well. You can even get in trouble, for being a few minutes late to formation, or having food in your locker.

The Article 15

A First Sergeant can give you an Article 15, for something, as little as, not dropping for push-ups, when a Sergeant orders you to. When you get an Article 15, you are given additional chores, to do, for 2-4 hours a day, after all your regular work and get a few hundred dollars, taken out of your small paycheck. This idea that the military commits all sort of terrible crimes and soldiers get a way with it is

not my experience at all, but high ranking officers may be able to get around the rules.

Always on Call

People who have never served in the military do not know this, but your enlistment in the military is not a 9 to 5 job. You can and will be taken away from your free time, for anything that your unit's leaders want you to do. It isn't just in time of war. or even for a good reason. It is not at convenient times that they call on you and you never get extra pay for it.

Pressures of an NCO

One of the big reasons it is so hard, to get qualified people, to serve a second enlistment in the Army is that you have to commit to being an NCO (like a Sergeant in the Army), for a small amount more pay, and then are solely and completely responsible, for 4-8 other soldiers. If they need to lose weight, you make sure they do so, in your free time. If they cannot get to work on time, it is your job to make sure they do so, in your free time.

Increased Confidence

Now that I have gone through such intense training, I feel much more confident, about things that would have previously scared me. My tolerance for pain has increased, as well. I now can push myself, to the point of a heart attack, while exercising, because I have been through much more pain, in the past. I am not afraid of getting into a fight, with a person or an animal. I am not afraid of having to survive, without modern plumbing, electricity, police, and fire services. I am still afraid of going to prison, but that is just commons sense. I gained my confidence with computers, at this time, as well.

3.1.3 Why I Never Gave Up

I am Complex

Many people wonder why I have committed, so many years to creating, what has now evolved, into many books. The answer is long and complex, as I am a complex person. First of all, the idea that I didn't give up is not true: I ended my military service before my tour enlistment was up and I never graduated from college.

I Did Fail

What interested me in philosophy at the time was Philosophical Taoism and Christian Existentialism. I was taking a Chinese Literature course, for my non-business breadth requirement, along with Chinese (which I had to drop out, of as they went too fast) and then because I did not pass enough classes, I had to take summer courses and Existentialism was one of the only courses still open.

I Identified with Philosophy

Taoism was a tradition in China that scholars became part of, if they failed their public service exam, which was based on writing poetry about Confucianism. Since I failed in both the military and college, I could identify with Taoism. When I took my Existentialism class, I realized that I had always been an Existentialist. Both of these philosophies emphasized humility and what I hated most was arrogance, so it was a natural fit.

Trying to Replace what I Lost

One of the reasons why I started writing so much was that I had burned my plans, for a Christian nation in Lebanon, for the time of the apocalypse. I destroyed this, when I was having my psychotic or paranoid episode. I also burned my poetry, that I had written for a girl in high school, while I was in the military, as I believed that future girl friends would not like that. After all this was

destroyed, I wanted to create something of equivalent value.

My Relief

After I was diagnosed with Schizophrenia, my chronic allergic pink eye cleared up, which I had for the previous 3 years, and I thought I had cancer, but I found out was wrong. At first, I thought my stay in the hospital was because of an emotional break down. I didn't find out, until a month later, that I had Paranoid Schizophrenia, so I asked if I would get worse and they said no, so I was very relieved.

I was Good at Something

I never considered giving up, or even knew how to do it. I worked hard to be able to read philosophy and write again. I found these activities very rewarding, as I was good at them, in contrast to most of the things I did in high school and the military (which I wasn't good at). I took on many activities to improve myself in high school, including: Boy Scouts, Speech, French, Cross Country, Track, and Cheerleading. I was also bad at infantry and working with computers, in the military.

I was Doing Something Important

I wanted to contribute something important in my life and as I tried various volunteer activities, I could never get a volunteer position, where I felt I was making, as much of a difference, as when I was writing. I knew if I didn't do what I was doing, then no one else would and I knew I would never make any money off of it. I continued to read as I found Asian philosophy to be very interesting and worthwhile to study. It helped me to be an ethical person and to understand myself better.

Until the World Ends

At this point, I have continued to have more and more to say over time, so I will continue as long, as the world

stays together. And the world ending as we know it has given me a push, to complete, as much, as possible, before everything falls apart. We are faced with more problems, with more severe and likely disasters than ever before. But I have never even thought of what giving up would mean or how I would do it, so I am definitely not giving up now. And, most importantly, my family and God has never given up on me either.

3.1.4 Ways in Which My Thinking is Chinese

Cyclical View of Time

In the modern world, time is often thought of as linear and sequential and that later times in history are always more advanced than earlier times. But the more we learn about history, the more we learn how advanced ancient cultures were and how much was lost shortly after these empires collapsed. We are finally learning that the Romans were more advanced than Europe up until the 19th century and most of the technologies that allowed the advance of Europe in the last 2 centuries were imports from China, ancient Greece, India, and the New World. Italian food was only recognizable after the noodle was imported from China and the tomatoes from the New World. From India came the concept of zero, the numbering system we use today, the use of chickens for food, and using cotton for clothing. Most Western war fighting technologies, including: gun powder, missiles, and modern information warfare techniques.

Emotional Factors First

Most people in the Europe and America relate in terms of what is called rational intelligence. This means that most people in the West base their interactions on facts, dates, figures, statistics, linear logic, and other things that can be written down and measured. Another approach is called emotional intelligence. This kind of thinking does not have any set rules nor lend themselves to a ob-

serve and record approach. Most communication is not in spoken words, but is instead communicated through body language. If someone does not like you at work, they can make your life miserable, even while following all the rules designed to make the work environment pleasant. You cannot pin down the way a person feels to a given event or a specific time frame, but they can identify who it is who is causing them pain.

Obsession with Self-Sufficiency

I think that it is important to know how to do as many things as possible. I learned early in my education about computers that I couldn't get anyone to solve the problem unless I paid them vast sums of money. This is when I started learning more and more about computers in order to know them well enough to fix problems myself. In my website and book publishing I also depend on as little as I can, so that I have control over the future of what I have created. I do everything myself because if you want someone to do a good job at something you have to pay them enormous sums and to get someone to do a great job at something, you need to do it yourself. One of the biggest problems today is that people have too low a standards in how they behave and how hard they work.

Different Formal and Private Manners

A lot of people that have met me think I am outgoing, friendly, optimistic, and have everything figured out. But this is only my public side. My family knows a very different side of me. I am really moody, passionate, artistic, critical, and dedicated. I spend a tremendous amount of time thinking and for a long time constantly thought of how I could improve my website in the back of my mind. I don't reveal much to a psychologist or doctor, because they are not family. It is also hard to be bare your souls with a bureaucracy when only random things you say are written down out of context and then you are forced to explain them many years later out of the blue to a totally different person. It is also hard to trust someone who is work-

ing from the government and is required to keep a record and pass on anything you might say to who knows what agency for who knows what reason without ever even telling you. It is funny that people are afraid of the things that they type into Google, but they are not afraid of the government having all the information and either losing it, mixing it up, or prosecuting you later for it, without informing you what for or given a chance to verify if the information is accurate (all because of the Patriot Act).

Importance of Writing and Written Culture

Writing is the vessel in which culture is contained, consumed, changed, and preserved. This generation wants to give up on reading, because they think it is too hard. Most people now just want to look at pretty pictures or funny videos of people doing stupid things. In the past, people fought hard, in all cultures, to get their kids into school and learn how to read and write. Many people would have paid almost any price to give their children a decent education. And the church used to be part of this tradition. The problem with relying on others to take care of the writing is that you lose the ability to participate in the culture. In other words, you are giving up your citizenship and your constitutional rights as well as your ability to understand religion, art, history, math, Science, or anything else communicate mainly in writing. When people lose the ability to express themselves with words they give up their freedom and their humanity. Without writing, we would not have anything other than stone tools and we would be living hand to mouth off the land, all by ourselves.

3.1.5 Why So Rational?

Why The Need to Explain Things?

I am actually much more mystical, than rational and the big reason why I have put so much effort into providing detailed arguments, for what I believe, is to ground me in reality. When suffering from paranoia, you can easily

get lost in fantasy and lose touch with reality. This does not mean that the fact based understanding of the world explains everything, nor is it the most important aspect of the world. But as much as I believe God helps me in everything I do, I don't expect to not pay my bills and instead wait on God, to pay them miraculously. Being spiritual should not mean giving up your ability to interact with others, to be on time, and to take care of your health and finances.

The Bible Doesn't Need Apologetics

I have focused a lot lately in my writings on being more systematic and giving reasoned out arguments, for my beliefs and decisions. At the same time, I do not believe that the Christian God or the Bible need my reasoned out arguments, for belief to spread. In fact, without me, the 3rd world has already realized that Western Civilization and Christianity are totally different things. They know that capitalism and imperialism is not the the only way to structure society.

Christianity Has Already Won

For the amount of time that Christianity was known in the third world, it took very little time to outnumber Islam 2 to 1. Also, those practicing indigenous religions are much more likely to favor Christianity, over Islam, in Africa and in East Asia there are many more Chinese Christians, than we know of. Even in Indonesia, which accepted Islam considerably recently, did so in the 13th Century. Islam had a thousand year head start in Africa (excluding the Christian enclave of Ethiopia) and Southern Asia (after successfully ethnic cleansing the Syriac language and Eastern Orthodox Christians in these areas).

Rationalism Has Improved my Situation

I have found that being rational in my public self has been useful, both in increasing my credibility with others

in the mental health system and people I meet, as well as, improved my ability to restrict paranoia, to a certain part of my mind. I believe that the world in which I live (America) is much more in need of embracing spirituality, than they need to listen to human reasoning and I have much more interest in the spiritual than the sciences. So, if I didn't have Schizophrenia, I would likely have never approached my work, in the way that I have now. I would likely have used art, instead of writing and the only writing would likely just be poetry.

3.2 Discover My Life Story

3.2.1 Childhood

I was born in 1978, and in Middle School, I saw the end of the Cold War and the fall of the Soviet Union and the Warsaw Pact, starting with the breaking down of the Berlin Wall. I grew up in the 90's when the world was much simpler. We didn't have any major wars going on and the economy was growing. Computers were simple and most people didn't have access to the Internet.

I was involved in church and Scouting from an early age. I started out in Tiger Cubs in 1st Grade and finished by becoming an Eagle Scout, just before I graduated from high school. I spent the years between 8 and 18 at an Evangelical Quaker church.

Elementary School was boring, while Middle School I was unpopular and it was a living hell. One of the things that made Middle School so bad is that I had some huge warts on my hands, which I had to get removed by acid, liquid nitrogen, and then by minor surgery. I also had a newspaper delivery route near my house and had to get up at 4 am twice a week, for several years. I had to collect the money, by going house to house and it was like pulling teeth, to get people to pay a couple bucks a month, for the newspaper.

3.2.2 High School

High School was much more fun, as I spent most my after school hours in a variety of activities and clubs. My junior year, I was involved in 12 extra curricular activities. I also became popular ,after I spent a year on the Cheer-leading Team, as the Yell King and Spirit Man. I also ran Cross Country and Track the other 3 years and my senior year I took weightlifting and conditioning, to get ready for the military.

I spent 2 of my summer vacations, during high school, working at Boy Scout summer camps. One was in the middle of a national forest in the mountains, by a small lake and the other was on the coast, with direct beach access. One summer, I also went to Washington, D.C., because I won first place in my state in a national peace essay contest, sponsored by the US Institute of Peace. In DC, we did a simulation of the conflict in Somalia during the mid 90's and got to meet important government and organizations like our congressional representatives, the State Department, the Red Cross, and more. We also saw the Smithsonian and toured the capitol.

During the school year, I participated in many clubs, including: Model United Nations, Speech, French Club. My junior year I also did Peer Counseling, Catering Club, and started my own Political Club. I missed so many days of school, due to my extra curricular activities, that I should have had to repeat most my years of high school. Most the activities I was involved with, I was bad at, including: Speech, sports, and Scouting. This influenced me to later focus on things I was good at, including the humanities and the arts.

3.2.3 Army

My junior year, I signed up for the Army, in the Delayed Entry Program. One reason I signed up was for the money for college, but I also believed that was what God wanted me to do, as preparation for something later. I left for the military a month after I graduated from High School. The military was very stressful, but very exciting. I knew I

was doing something important, but I also was terrified of a number of the risks involved, especially of the threat of chemical weapons.

One of the things we had to do in Basic Training was go into a gas chamber for 5 minutes, with CS gas (which is a kind of tear gas) and then take off our masks, while we were inside. I felt like I was being burned alive. I figured if the training gas was so bad, then the real chemical weapons must be infinitely worse. Later, the psychiatrists that diagnosed me with Schizophrenia thought that the gas chamber was the time when I had my first psychological break with reality.

I was in the military from 2 July 1996 to 15 August 1997. I finished all my training, to work with computers and I was stationed in Hawaii from February to August 1997. I really enjoyed Hawaii. I was on the island of Oahu – the one with Honolulu and most the tourist sites on it. I got to see almost every thing there for tourists. I also took and passed several college classes and tests that counted for college credit. I ended up completing my Freshman Year of college, during my stay in the military. What I enjoyed most about Hawaii was the people at the churches I went to.

I left the military with an Honorable Discharge under the regulations for discharges for combat stress. I was diagnosed with Schizoid personality disorder. I left in 5 weeks, after going to my commanding officer, and asking to get out. I was obviously out of my mind, at the time. Never do it this way. Even dishonorable discharges take longer than this.

When I was in the military, they had a number of different discharges, including: general, other than honorable, etc. In the military, you can get what is called an Article 15, for minor infractions, like being late to formation or having food in your locker. You get fined a couple hundred dollars and get several weeks of extra duty, after your work. Any NCO can give one of these out, for almost anything, no matter how minor. If I had one of these, since I was only in for a year, I could have gotten one of the other discharges, like general, which would have kept me from being able to get my disability pension later on.

Luckily, I had none of these.

When I left Basic Training, I got chronic allergic conjunctivitis (also known as pink eye), which I had for several years more, until I got started on my first anti-psychotic, when I first got diagnosed with Schizophrenia. My eyes itched and burned all the time until then.

3.2.4 College

When I left the military, I started at a local Community College for a year, to complete my lower division required courses, for business management. I hated the business classes, but I believed that this was the way to a good job and so I did it anyway. I had to take accounting 5 times to pass it, although I did very well in economics. After continuing for a year at the local University in town, I finally decided to change majors, to Journalism, as I enjoyed and was good at writing and I believed it would get me a good job.

I tried taking a Chinese language and a History of Philosophy series of courses, but stopped taking Chinese, because I couldn't learn the language fast enough and the philosophy courses, because I forgot to do the first paper which would have given me an F. I also had to drop an advanced Feminist Anthropology course, because I couldn't figure out what phrasing the teacher wanted me to use for my papers and I had to drop a required course in Statistics, because my ability to do basic math left me.

Along the way, I took a Chinese literature series of courses, for my breadth requirement, a class on Existentialism, and one on Ecofeminism, to make up for courses which I failed, plus an advanced class on Beauvoir and did well in all of them. This was when I realized I was good at philosophy. This is also when I started the website and started writing poetry about God and religion.

3.2.5 Schizophrenia

Then on 11 December 1999, I had a break down and had my first psychotic episode. My parents found me walking on the street and took me to the hospital emergency room.

I was talking a mile a minute. The doctors thought I was on methamphetamine, until I took a urine test. Then they sent me to the psychiatry ward of another local hospital, where I went in voluntarily. I spent 10 days (until my dad's insurance stopped) and then left in my parents care.

I found out a month later that I had Paranoid Schizophrenia. I just watched TV, for the first several months, but then started reading, where I left off, in my Chinese Literature and Existentialism classes. I then wrote up my paranoid episode and started writing poetry again.

That fall, I left my parents home and stayed in a local mental health group home with 8 other mentally ill men. I stayed there until I got my veteran's pension. Then I moved out into my own apartment and had an in home care worker help me with cooking and cleaning. I later spent some time in a retirement home, after having trouble with the in home care and to make sure I remembered my medicine. I stayed there for 2 years and had to eat terrible food and deal with some very nasty and delusional old people.

Then I left, for my own apartment again. I chose one next to an independent living arrangement for the mentally ill and they monitored my medicine. Now I am completely on my own and I published 4 books with what I had written up until then and then continued to write.

3.3 Discover My Disability

3.3.1 Background Information

General Information

Schizophrenia describes a wide spectrum of mental health disorders. Schizophrenia is a thought disorder and is the worst mental illness one can have. It is not known what causes it. There is a genetic tendency and then it is brought out by a stressful situation, most commonly, military service. About 1% of the population has Schizophrenia worldwide and it has the same rates of infection across the globe, in every country and culture. Diagnosis doesn't generally happen until the affected person has a psychotic

episode and breaks a minor law, so they can be sent to a psychiatric hospital (I never committed a crime and voluntarily signed myself in). The illness generally starts for men in their 20's and for women in their 30's, but it can easily take a decade to admit they have a problem and to get properly diagnosed and on effective medicine.

Common Misunderstandings

Schizophrenia has nothing to do with multiple personality disorder and is very different from bipolar disorder and clinical depression. Schizophrenia has no effect on your intelligence, independence of thinking, or creativity. Schizophrenia is often confused with some sort of existential crisis of spirit or as a sign of someone having the special spiritual ability, but in reality having spiritual powers has nothing to do with Schizophrenia. Schizophrenia is a mental disability and does not give the person any special gifts. In fact, a person with Schizophrenia has less control of their mind and would find things like meditation to be very difficult. Confusing spiritual powers and mental illness is insulting to both groups as it creates the perception that spiritually aware people are somehow disabled and it insults people with Schizophrenia who try to avoid the spiritual world.

3.3.2 Dealing with the Illness

Symptoms

The symptoms of Schizophrenia are grouped into positive and negative categories, positive meaning what you have in addition to what a normal person has and negative meaning lacking something a normal person has. The positive symptoms can include paranoia, auditory hallucinations (hearing voices), and delusions. The negative symptoms include depression, lack of motivation, and lack of facial expression.

Treatment

Schizophrenia was only successfully treated to some extent since the 1950s when it was discovered that tranquilizers, also known as sedatives, helped. Sedatives are the only treatment that has had any degree of success. Counseling can help as a secondary treatment. There is no traditional medicine treatment that works for Schizophrenia. Before the 1950s, a person with Schizophrenia would starve to death, because when a person goes into a psychotic episode, they stop eating.

Medicine and Side Effects

The medicine brings the positive symptoms under control, but it does not get rid of all of them, so that you can deal with them and either causes or does not alleviate the negative symptoms. The medicine does not make you any less creative, any less independent of thought or affect your intelligence. The medicine slows things down and make you very sleepy and gain a lot of weight. The newest medicines are supposed to not cause sleepiness and weight gain and just target the mind, but they still have those same side effects for me. Only certain drugs work on certain people and for many people the newer drugs aren't effective on them or they cannot afford them. It is very hard for a person with Schizophrenia, to remember to take their medicine. Many people stop taking their medicine, because they have less symptoms than before and they think they don't need it any more. This usually results in having to go back to the hospital and starting from scratch.

3.3.3 Living with the Situation

Daily Life

A third of people with Schizophrenia just stare at the wall all day, a third are in assisted living and a third are mostly independent. People with Schizophrenia are no more violent than anyone else, but are often the victims of crimes, as people try to get them involved in various

scams and they also often live in poor neighborhoods, as most have to live on a state pension that is very small. Many people with Schizophrenia cannot read anything longer than a newspaper article and although there is often an increased interest in religion, it is almost impossible for someone with Schizophrenia to understand philosophy, regardless of intelligence. Schizophrenia is related to anxiety disorder, but many degrees of magnitude greater. People with Schizophrenia are often uncomfortable around other people and live isolated lives.

Unqualified Workers

Many people are hard to diagnose as to what mental illness they have, which is made worse by the fact that many mentally ill individuals have tried to self medicate with various street drugs and many of the workers in the mental health system do not have adequate training and try to push certain agendas like telling people to treat their symptoms by some kind of diet, some sort of meditation, or to reduce the amount of medicine they are on which are all ineffective.

3.3.4 My Situation

Paranoid Schizophrenia

I have Paranoid Schizophrenia. This is the worst kind of Schizophrenia. What is most disabling symptom to me is paranoia. Paranoia is basically a kind of terror – think fear on steroids. Paranoia and delusions are similar, but usually distinguished by paranoia being a fear of people coming after you and delusions include other situations you imagine, all of which are not real. My diagnosis is definite, as I have been diagnosed to have the same mental illness by 3 independent psychiatrists, and no psychiatrists since then have ever challenged my diagnosis (psychiatrists are the only ones qualified to diagnose mental illness, which have much more training than a psychologist, even one with a Ph.D.). I also have never taken any street drugs or abused prescriptions, which made it easier

to diagnose me.

Behavioral Strategies

In addition to the medicine I take, I have several other methods, that help keep my symptoms under check. I have to be careful what I watch on TV and read on the Internet, to avoid things that trigger increased paranoia. I keep busy with projects, to avoid paranoid thoughts and voices. I also get out, as often as possible, to keep myself grounded in reality. I try to limit what I do, at any one time, so that I don't get stressed out, to avoid depression and paranoid thoughts. I have also have a PRN medicine I can take, when I am having acute symptoms.

3.4 Mental Illness

3.4.1 The Schizophrenia Split

Reality vs. Fantasy

Many people confuse multiple personality disorder with Schizophrenia, but these disorders are totally unrelated. Schizophrenia does cause a mental split, but not between different personalities. The split is between fantasy and reality.

Like Apostle Paul

The two aspects of your mind are a lot like that which the Apostle Paul talks about in his Letters to the different early churches in the New Testament. Paul talks about the spiritual man and the carnal man as being constantly at war, so although part of you doesn't want to sin, the other part is addicted to it and wants to continue participating in those behaviors. Paul says that even he does not do what he want to do, but that which he doesn't want to do, he does.

Counseling Doesn't Work

In experiencing the symptoms of Schizophrenia, the person knows in one part of their mind that what they fear or what they imagine is not based on reality, but the other part of them still fears or imagines that anyway. A lot of psychology is about trying to overcome your addictions and usually focuses on both cognitive and behavioral solutions to the patient's obsessions and other destructive behavior. But the paranoia and delusions caused by Schizophrenia cannot be dealt with in the usual way.

Only Medicine Works

Traditional counseling does not solve the fantastic beliefs a person with Schizophrenia suffers with. The only effective way to treat Schizophrenia is by sedatives/tranquilizers. The medicine works by slowing the entire body down, including the mind. This medicine lowers the intensity of the paranoia and delusions, but does not resolve the other symptoms of Schizophrenia, including: depression, inappropriate facial expressions, lack of motivation, and trouble relating with other people.

3.4.2 Symptoms of Schizophrenia

Types of Schizophrenia

Schizophrenia is a broad category of different mental disorders mostly caused by abnormal development of the brain in the adolescent years. Schizophrenia is caused by a combination of a genetic tendency and a stressful experience. Most people think that people with Schizophrenia all have hallucination, paranoia, and delusions. There are actually different types of Schizophrenia and some of them do not have paranoia or hallucinations as symptoms.

Variety of Symptoms

Hallucinations suffered by people with Schizophrenia are almost always auditory and are mostly voices. Only some

people who have Schizophrenia hear voices. Paranoia is about fear of people or other sentient beings coming after you, while delusions involve all the other types of misconceptions about reality. Most people who have Schizophrenia have delusions, but only some of them suffer from paranoia.

Schizophrenia vs. Other Mental Illnesses

Paranoid Schizophrenia is widely accepted as the most disabling mental illness. The main reason why Schizophrenia is more serious than clinical depression or bipolar disorder is that these disorders are mood disorders, while Schizophrenia is a thought disorder. There is also a hybrid disorder which causes much less severe symptoms of Schizophrenia combined with either the mania or depression aspects of bipolar disorder.

3.4.3 Fear is Not Fun

What is Paranoia?

Many people enjoy activities that give them a rush for fear like: skydiving, bungee jumping, living in deserts or tundra, watching horror movies, going to haunted houses, traveling to war zones, or being a volunteer fire fighter, a policeman, or a prison guard. Some of these activities that people engage in help us out and we are indebted to those, who are willing to, for whatever reason, risk their lives, for our protection.

I have a unique perspective on what is commonly referred to as paranoia: which is an extreme form of perpetual fear, although it is not based on the reality of the situation you are in. But it is very real to those experiencing it. This kind of fear is not fun, it is very exhausting, and the adrenaline rush is not something that those who suffer with this enjoy in any way.

When you have fear that is out of your control and not something you can stop, by avoiding dangerous situations or not reading or watching movies about them. It is not a fear that you can reason out and place limits on

and it makes it no less real to your mind, even though you know, in another part of your mind, that it is baseless.

Medicine Causes Constant Tiredness

People who don't take medicine for pain or mental illness often think that the medicine takes away the entirety of the symptoms, but this is not true. Even while taking powerful sedatives, I experience paranoia frequently. One of the side effects of taking powerful sedatives is that they affect the entire body and are not just limited to slowing down the brain. They make my body so tired, that I am constantly more tired, than I ever was, even while doing intense training in the military and only getting 3 hours sleep at night.

I am always exhausted, no matter how much sleep I get, and never feel fully rested. I cannot just sleep or stop working, when I am when I am tired, because if I did that, I would never stop sleeping. At the same time as my body is very tired, my mind is still very active. Part of the reason why I work so fast is that my mind has always been much faster than other people's, because I have always been very intelligent. Another reason for working so fast is that I do not have as much time to work as other people do, because I cannot work for hours on end and not get stressed out and over stimulated.

People Think "He is Totally Crazy" or "He has No Problems"

And people who are not familiar with mental illnesses assume that a person is totally out of control of their mind and is living in a complete fantasy world. But if they were then they would not be able to work out the elaborate scenarios, they use to protect themselves from the fear. When you are paranoid or delusional, you have a certain aspect of your brain that believes a reality that is not accurate, but most of your reasoning ability still works. People often think people will become violent when they are

paranoid, but it is most likely that they will avoid other people and escape from situations that scare them.

The things that are most disabling to me and cause me to avoid activities, that most people enjoy, are a combination of my paranoia and my lack of energy. It is hard to meet new people and engage in new activities, when you constantly worry about the “worst case scenario” It is also hard to do physical activities or go out in the evenings or the early mornings, when you are so tired.

In addition, much of the volunteer work is not fulfilling, because most volunteer jobs are not very interesting and, at the same time, volunteering requires that you commit to a set schedule. Having to do the same thing every day is very stressful for me. Other city clubs also require you to do a lot of work. People generally don’t believe I can do anything, so they never give me a chance or they don’t believe that I am really disabled, so they don’t give me extra consideration.

3.4.4 Extreme Anxiety

Related Symptoms

Schizophrenia is related to anxiety and obsessive compulsive disorder, in that it is common for people who have Schizophrenia to have symptoms common to those suffering from these other disorders. Paranoia is really just an extreme form of fear and anxiety is like fear but less intense, so it is reasonable for these disorders to have cross-over symptoms.

Common Symptoms

The most common anxiety symptoms amongst people with Schizophrenia are: an avoidance of confrontations and other stressful situations, anxiety about being around more than couple people at once, and an aversion to many daily activities that most people participate in. This is one of the main causes of isolation amongst people with Schizophrenia apart from the typical financial factors.

What Stresses Me Out

One of the things that stresses me out is any situation where I am overly mentally stimulated like: being in crowded, infrequently visited, or new places; trying to listen to music or play complicated or thinking games for long periods of time; any interactions that require filling our forms or dealing with bureaucracy; waiting for meetings, events, and transportation that are not on time; dealing with obnoxious, talkative, aggressive, or rude people; dealing with the elderly, the homeless, the developmentally disabled, or children; and other similar situations.

Overcoming Anxiety

One of the worst things you can do if you have the symptoms of an anxiety disorder or obsessive compulsive disorder is to give in to the obsessive thoughts. The more you follow your obsessive thoughts with compulsive actions, the more addictive and intense the thoughts become and the more the symptoms increasing take over and dominate your life. To overcome theses disorders, you need to gradually increase your exposure to the thing that disturbs you.

3.4.5 Separate and Not Equal**Not Treated as Equals**

One of the things that bothers me most about being mentally ill is that the people whose job it is to provide services for us do not know anything about the mentally ill. Instead of treating us as equals and people who need extra help, they pressure us by: not trusting us, not listening to us, not explaining things to us correctly, not being consistent or reliable, assuming they always know more than us, assuming everyone's situation is the same, treating us as criminals, assuming our time is not important, using fear to intimidate us, making services difficult and time consuming to access, and trying to control us by having control over our access to our medicine, our money, and our independence.

Source of Problems

The biggest sources of the problems are: that all the services provided for the mentally ill are constantly being reduced due to budget cuts even when the economy is doing well, using a complex bureaucracy under the assumption that this prevents dishonest people from making money off the services, the people that run the services are there because they get a power trip over controlling other people, and the general lack of knowledge by those whose job it is to provide services for the mentally ill.

Political Correctness

Every other disability even one like ADHD where almost everyone has, the government goes to great lengths financially, legally, and socially to empower those people affected, whereas with the mentally ill it is politically correct to: blame us for problems not related to us, single us out in ways that would never be acceptable for other people with disabilities, expect things that are unreasonable to expect of us, perpetuating stereotypes and urban myths that have no basis in reality, denying us funding, letting criminals illegitimately use mental illness to get out of prison time so that people continue to assume that the mentally ill are out of control or commit crimes more than other people, and generally use our disability against us.

We Want Equal Help

The blind get people to go to great lengths to convert books to tapes and braille, pressure webmaster to have to redesign their website so that blind people can access them, and create talking crossing lights all at great expense to the taxpayers. The government goes to great lengths to make ramps for wheel chairs and add wheelchair lifts to public buses. The developmentally disabled a tremendous amount of government funds, get special classrooms and funds for their education, and they get to behave aggressively and be obnoxious when they control themselves. I don't want other people with different disabilities to get

less from the government, but I don't know why the mentally ill don't get the same amount of government support financially, legally, and socially.

3.5 General Psychological Issues

3.5.1 The Corruption of Individuality

Definition of Consumerism

I cannot give a set definition of consumerism that holds true for everyone. Obviously we in the West and more and more in the rest of the world have to work and pay for entertainment to relax. This is not what I mean by consumerism. Just like being rich is relative and not wrong in and of itself, it all comes down to what Paul said of sin: if you do mostly what you do not want to do, that is a sin and an addiction. If you can pay your bills and are not overwhelmed by debt, then just follow your conscience. If other people think you have a problem, that would be a fairly reliable sign of a problem. Even work can be a sin and an addiction, of which I am often guilty. And becoming saved will not necessarily give you the ability to you overcome your addiction right away.

Consumerism = Sin = Addiction

The modern American culture is based on consumerism. The reason why businesses and governments want us to continue to be primarily consumers, rather than producers, is because they know they get more than just our money – they get our souls. In other words, consumerism is based on sin and addiction times 10. We constantly talk about how much we save, when we buy things and how wonderful it is to have the wealth, freedom, and variety to choose what we want. But in our quest to exercise our freedom, we our becoming slaves to our addictions.

Not True Freedom

Modern American consumerism is so addictive because: we can afford it, we get instant gratification, and we get prestige by buying the same things as other people do. Ultimately we want to be happy and belong to a group. The problem is rooted in our misunderstanding of the concept of individuality and our democracy being based on inalienable rights. Some of the most extreme individualists are the Existentialist philosophers, but they always associated freedom with responsibility and freedom from conformity, as vital components of their beliefs.

How to Conquer Our Addictions

The true way to conquer our addictions is to submit ourselves to God. We think in being able to do whatever we want that we are free, but it doesn't work that way. We were designed to have God be part of our lives. When we say want freedom, what we usually mean is that we want to belong to something greater than ourselves. The admission to almost any group is costly in money, time, and comes with a loss of freedom in thinking. The admission to the family of God is free in money and allows you to be the one in control of your destiny.

Controlling Your Future

God does not want you to submit to Him out of fear of going to Hell, or out of desperation after trying everything else. God just wants us to follow His rules, because He created us and the rules are there for our protection. Being led by God and following His rules will save us from our addiction, allow us to belong to the greatest family, and allows us to have free choice in what we do, without ultimately serving others, by our choices. You have to choose what group you want to belong to: the one that gives you hollow freedom that leads you to physical and spiritual death, or the one that gives you a new life and new genuine freedom, that you can control with God's help.

3.5.2 Reasons to Relax

Relaxing is Important

Part of life is rest and doing things you enjoy is a need, not a want. As much as I talk about how bad the mistakes are that we have made, how people should push themselves and give their all, and my sadness at the loss of interest in fine literature and art; it is good to play games, watch TV, and lay down for a nap. Just as you work hard, so you need a way stop your work, enjoy what you have created, and distract yourself from the problems, in your life and in the world. No one can work constantly and still remain healthy enough to continue their work.

Making Time to Relax

Most of us are too busy to enjoy life or have time to spend with people, outside our families. If we allow ourselves time to relax, we will be more patient with each others, accomplish more in less time, and make better decisions. Rest is as important as work and we need to have both a balanced and healthy life. When we cut back, on things we think we have to do, we will have more time to do what we want to do and we will enjoy life more. It is also easier to have contact with God, when you take time out to stop working, so that you can concentrate on what God has to say, without distractions.

Being Creative

Relaxation is important for creative people, because you often get your best ideas, when not consciously thinking about them. Often times inspiration comes, when doing some daily routines, that don't require much thought. You also cannot really judge your work, when you are tired, like you can evaluate it, when you are rested up. If you get discouraged with something you created, don't throw it away. Decide about it, after you finish sleeping.

Dealing with Schizophrenia

Relaxing is important, for people with Schizophrenia, as it is easier for us to get over stimulated and get stressed out, when dealing with everyday situations, that are much more difficult for us to deal with, than for other people. Another major problem, for people who suffer with Schizophrenia, is the paranoia or delusions, that constantly wear on us, much like pain drains your energy. The medicines that treat some of the symptoms of Schizophrenia are often sedating, so they make the person affected much more tired than other people.

Making Good Decisions

To make a difference in the world, we need to make good decisions about the economy, environment, international relations and other big issue that affect us on a large scale. But to get there, we need to start making smart choices in our individual lives, on a much smaller scale. We need to give ourselves time to rest and recover, just like we need to: allow areas for the environment to return to its original state, have the patience to give other leaders time to think and have time away when making important decisions, and we need to give our economy allowances for not always growing and not constantly expect more out of it all the time.

3.6 Me and My Writing

3.6.1 Why So Serious?

Childhood Experiences

I am a very unusual and a very complex person. I also had an unusual childhood and have had untypical experiences as a young adult. School was really boring to me, but I enjoyed learning on my own through reading, especially: historical novels, news magazines, and encyclopedias. I was also very silly and had a slap stick style of

humor. I grew up in the 90s when the economy was going good, America was thought of as the good guy, we had relative peace in the world, and it looked like people in power were going to take the environmental problems seriously and fix them before they got real bad.

The Military Experience

But all this changed, when I joined the military. In the time that I got off the plane, to when I met my first Drill Sergeant, I lost all my appreciation for the lighter side of life. When I signed up for the military, I didn't realize the life and death decision I made, until I went into the Gas Chamber at Basic Training. This is the time that the psychiatrist that first diagnosed me believed I had my first psychotic episode. A few months later, I got an allergy induced (not contagious) pink eye, which I suffered with constantly, until I was on my first antipsychotic in the hospital for a week (I realize that my allergic reaction was increased dramatically, due to the stress of being mentally ill, without medication).

College Experiences

I went to college, when I got out of the military, for 2 years and I picked up another year, after I tested out of a year of college, at the end of my time in the military. I was only in the military for 13 months, but I completed all my training and made it to my permanent duty station, before I left the military. I started taking business classes, because I thought it was the best way to get a good job, but hated it. I was in constant pain due to my pink eye. I changed my major later on to Journalism, shortly before I ended up in the mental ward of a local private hospital.

Experience with Mental Illness

After I was diagnosed with Schizophrenia, I had trouble reading or writing, but finally started again and then, at the end of that summer, I entered into a group home, with 8 other mentally ill men. I didn't have much money: less

than \$300 a month, at first. Then the following summer I got my permanent pension, from the VA (100% disability) and I got my first apartment. I got my disability a few months before September 11 and, if that had not happened, I would likely be an infantry soldier in Iraq now.

Experience Recovering

We tried various in home care workers, to help me with cleaning my house and making sure I took my medicine, but got so frustrated working with them that I entered a retirement home, for two years. After being picked on for all that time by senile people, I left for my own apartment again, next to an apartment complex for the mentally ill, who had their medications managed for them, and I contracted their services for about 6 months. Now I live totally independently.

The World Today

The situation in the world today is a very serious one. We don't just have an economic recession. We are at the very limits of what our planet can provide in terms of oil, soil, and drinkable water. At the very least our economy has permanently contracted. We cannot leave Iraq or Afghanistan any time soon, even if all of Congress and the White house were in agreement. Whenever oil gets too expensive, our entire economy will collapse very quickly and we will have to learn to live without electricity and modern plumbing. We are also going to have some great problems with most major cities having to deal with sea level rises, we will be getting El Nino every year on the west coast of the Americas, and New York city and Boston and everything down to Florida will be getting hurricanes bigger than Katrina, every year. Europe could go into another ice age and India is going to have a major water shortage.

Being intelligent does not make life easy and knowing the answers to problems does not help, because the people in power don't listen to us.

3.6.2 My Style

What is Unique About Me

What makes me unique is not the topics I write about, but the situation I am in, as well as my passion and commitment to pursuing truth. I have lots of time, unusual experiences and a unique perspective, and I don't have to earn a living, so have pursued education in a number of areas. Since I enjoy helping others, I decided to give back, by writing about what I have learned. I even give away my creations for free. I can promise you that I will not write about something, unless I thoroughly understand it and can give a unique perspective on the topic. I also do not profit from anything I write about.

Clear and Concise

The simplest explanation of why my books are so short is that I believe that people don't have much time, so I don't want to waste it with unnecessary repetition. I find it hard to read long books and believe that most books can be shortened to a twenty page essay. I also find repetition very frustrating, as I get it the first time. I was inspired, by seeing how brief some of the most famous Chinese writings were, like the Tao Te Ching. My books are a compilation of many shorter essays and poetry.

Why Non-Fiction

I write mainly non-fiction as I that is what I read. I read non-fiction, because reading is very difficult for me, since I have Schizophrenia and if I make the effort to read, I want to learn something. Reading is not enjoyable in and of itself for me, but I do enjoy learning. I have also liked reading mostly non-fiction as a kid, as well.

My Interest in Philosophy

Many people study philosophy to learn how to debate and are interested in the technical subtleties of the discipline.

Philosophy affects me very personally and in very practical ways. My interest in philosophy is about learning to make better use of my life. To me, one of the most important parts of philosophy is ethics. The reason I have been interested in philosophy so long and why Asian philosophy interests me so much is the passion mystics and philosophers have for their beliefs. If you read Hafiz, Kabir, Rousseau, or Nietzsche; you will understand what I mean about having passion for their beliefs.

I write about what I know and what I have read a lot about. I started reading philosophy in college, as I found out I was good at it and the Existential and Chinese Philosophies I studied in school explained much of why I thought the way I did. I actually had been a Christian Existentialist and Philosophical Taoist as a kid and just had not known the proper terminology. As early as middle school, I understood paradox and believed that people couldn't be objective.

When I was in college, it seemed like every class blamed White Christian Males as the source of all the problems in the world, but I realized that things started getting exponentially worse as atheism became more acceptable and mainstream. The world was not nearly as screwed up in medieval times when the church was in power, as it has in the twentieth century, where atheist ideas were the basis for policy. Most of the world that was supposedly persecuted by Christianity is now more Christian, than any other religion. Most people in the developing world understand that Christianity has nothing to do with Western Civilization.

Managing Complexity

There is something more to my style and how I design. My desire is to keep things as simple as possible. I constantly have people I know say that what I write or explain is too complicated and people who think they are experts say that I am oversimplifying. My desire is to make my communication as clear as possible, while being faithful to the message.

I already think that most things in life tend to be too

complicated for not a good enough reason. Simply said, I hate splitting hairs, using advanced words, and do not use subtlety much at all. I want to be very clear about what it is I believe and what it is I stand for and I don't want to waste people's time with unnecessary details.

I do at the same time strive to keep things complex enough to do them justice. I can simplify things down to certain point, but beyond that people need to realize that not everything is a simple as operating an iPhone. Not everything can be reduced to a Powerpoint presentation or bullet points.

3.6.3 Research Issues

Why Spend So Much Time and Effort?

I have been studying and writing about philosophy, religion, literature, history, and art (the humanities), for 11 years, for a number of reasons. First, I am a disabled veteran and get a full pension from the VA, and do not work for an income, so I have lots of time. Second, I want to make a difference and when I do something I fully commit to it. Third, I have chosen a very complex and broad field, so it has taken this long to get enough material for writing books. Fourth, I enjoy it and have complete control over it, while I do not have that kind of control in many areas of my life. Fifth, it helps me to deal with my mental illness by keeping busy.

To really be good at something and to make a difference in the world requires a tremendous effort and a big commitment. Things that are worth doing take a long time. You cannot expect to accomplish something important without a real struggle and a lot of patience.

Books are not written overnight and websites are very difficult to design and maintain. Many people want to put as little effort into something as possible, while I do the opposite. It really shows how much you know, when you write about something. You cannot take the easiest route and get good results. We only live once, so we need to get the most we can out of it.

The Scope of My Research

The books which I have read and recommend, which are the basis of my understanding of philosophy and religion, were chosen very carefully. I have deliberately chosen not to read certain books, for various reasons. I only chose books that were well written and clear and concise. I have focused my reading mostly on Asian classics and most the books I have found to be helpful in improving myself.

I have specifically avoided many typical Greek, Roman, and white American and English writings, because they are so over read and recommended and represent a very narrow view of the world and most of what I want to change. I usually only read one book by each author, unless I feel it is very important. I also have avoided books that were very expensive and/or very difficult to find. I don't read many female authors as I usually cannot understand them. And most importantly, I have avoided reading certain book or areas of philosophy because the Bible forbids them.

The following list includes my exact reasons that I have quoted from my Book of Lists, which lists the books I recommend, as well as survival equipment and various other things as well.

- If you see a book that you think should be on the list but is not, likely I have already read it and didn't include it because it was too hard for others to read or it was poorly written including being too repetitive or not being clear and concise.
- I have also particularly focused on Asian and classical texts, and have especially tried to limit the Greek, Roman, white American and English writing to as few works as possible, because I think those areas are over read and I have little interest in them after having to read so many of them in high school.
- Most of the works I have included I agree with or at least partly agree with and believe can be useful for personal growth except for most the books or the topics contained in "History - Establishment" cate-

gories which I believe are only worthwhile for understanding history.

- I also have usually only included one book by each author and not necessarily the most famous, but rather the most useful one.
- Another consideration is the cost and availability of the works. For works that are difficult to find or expensive to buy, I have generally stayed away from.
- I generally avoid female writers as most of them I cannot understand.
- This is also a great list for Christians who want to study world religions and philosophies without studying the occult.

Frustrations with Web-Based Content

Problems Networking

At one time, I had hoped to expand upon my work and get other people motivated to create their own, from their point of view, but I have found there is no interest. I see great things on web pages sometimes, but it is all copyrighted and I can never get anyone to return my email. Most people put everything in the junk folder, unless they already know the person and are so afraid of scams that it is very difficult to network with other web site owners.

Barriers to Sharing

The problem with anything good you find on the web is that you cannot use it or copy it, but that the same time the person who created it takes it off the web very soon, so we lose all record of it. Also, people seem very resistant to putting thing in PDF files, which make it much easier to archive information. Then most people, if they can write well or produce great art, cannot produce a site that is not visually offensive, or know so little about it that it is inaccessible to even the most advanced users.

Why I Do It Myself

Since no one else is willing or able to create free content and keep it available consistently, I think long and hard before I link to someone doing something similar to what I do. And most people are motivated solely by money, so I would have to pay, to get anyone to contribute anything, but I don't have the money. I hear people all the time recommending I use professional Adobe software, but I cannot afford to, as no one will pay me for what I do.

Why I Didn't Read in the Original Languages

Another branch of the humanities that I have not gone into is languages and linguistics. There are several reasons for this. One is that I cannot speak or listen very well and the other is that it would be impractical and for not much gain.

I have wanted to learn Chinese and Arabic, but I took French in school and never learned it very well, as I have trouble hearing different words that sound similar. I was also very bad in Speech Club in high school. I even have trouble speaking and understanding English.

I don't move my lips enough, because I have learned to not move my lips, while thinking out loud, as I don't want my thoughts to all be public, for people who can read lips. This happened once in high school. I also speak very fast and have such a wide range of knowledge that it is hard for many people to keep up with me.

Another barrier for me learning another language is that, if I have to do something every day, it really stresses me out. To keep up languages skills, you have to practice daily. I also would have to find someone who knows the language to practice with and then I have to meet with them at regular times.

If I wanted to read even the most basic selection of Asian philosophy and religion in the original languages, I would have to learn at least 10 languages and many of those are not in modern usage. A tremendous number of the most important texts have modern English transla-

tions, so I did not have to limit my reading, by not knowing the original languages.

3.6.4 Artistic Approach

Overview

I do most my art with the computer and the themes I illustrate are typically based on my reading and writing which is primarily about the religion, philosophy, and literature of Asia. I am not talented at the technical skills of drawing and painting but I do have an eye for what looks good and that cannot be taught.

I have had basically no formal training in art and like doing so as a release and a way to relax, so I am not interested in learning new artistic skills, at least in the short term. I use my skills on the computer to craft my illustrations. I use a wide variety of different programs to get different effects. I generally use free programs and programs from small companies, often with restrictions, so that I almost never pay over \$150 for any one graphics program.

The last part of the book is done with Scribus and Inkscape, 2 open source graphics programs. I vectorize the illustrations with Inkscape by: clicking on the PNG image I open up, then choosing “Path”, then “Trace Bitmap”, choosing the “Colors” option, and then clicking on “OK” to apply. I then move the vector image over and delete the bitmap version, move the vector image back to where it was, and then save as in the default SVG format. I use Scribus for the publishing program part. I import the SVG versions of the graphics, resize them to fit on the page, and then I create the PDF, with the following options: under General, choose “PDF 1.3” for “Compatibility”, check “Compress Text and Vector Graphics”, choose “Lossless – ZIP” for “Compression Method”, “Maximum” for “Compression Quality”; under Fonts, choose “Outline All”; and under Color, choose “Screen/Web”. This works well for publishing with Lulu.com.

For the screen versions, I use the PNG versions with iPhoto and export to web page for the web gallery version

and with Keynote I use the plain black theme at 800 x600 resolution, export to Quicktime format for the interactive slideshow version, and then I compress it in Zip format to reduce the size.

World Beliefs Illustrations Book

My first illustrations book, *World Beliefs Illustrations*, is organized by belief systems and I used a wide variety of programs for each illustration that looks like it was done in a different style.

I used Expression before Microsoft bought it, the “lite” version of Painter, Toon Boom Studio Express with Photoshop Elements filters, Gimp, and drew some by hand which I later scanned in.

Ethics and Discovery Illustrations Book

For my latest illustrations book, *Ethics and Discovery*, each image is generally a composite of work done in multiple programs. Most of these illustrations has a photographic component.

The first part, *Justice and Common Sense*, was done with my photos plus using a plugin in Photoshop Elements. I used the Alien Skin nature textures plugin, I purchased separately, in Photoshop Elements to create the effects in the illustrations plus I used the shapes and layer styles features, that comes with Photoshop Elements, and this was all done on top of and with my my own personal photographs. The ideas the graphics were illustrating different are things that bother my a lot about modern society including injustice and just plain stupidity.

The second part, *Discover the Old World*, was done with a variety of different programs. The graphics come from web graphics used for my website. I also included some of the original images used to create the various composites.

I used Carrara Express for most the logos, the “Discover” word with the lighted candle, and for the landscapes which also utilized a number of models, I purchased

at the DAZ3d online store plus what I was able to download free from them, and what came with Carrara Express. The logos are explained in the website themes section. The landscapes have some other features on them including Asian art from my previous book as well as a rendering of water, done with a Photoshop plugin called Flood.

The background for most the images is a spotlight on a golden-orange-yellow textured background. I created this each time it was used from scratch, with Photoshop Elements, by first creating a layer with just one color, applying the golden textured layer style, simplified the layer. Then I created another layer, by choosing black and a yellow orange for the foreground and background colors, and then applying the render clouds filter on a new layer. Then I changed the opacity on this new layer, so that you could see a glow over the golden texture, and then merged the 2 layers. I then applied the same render lights filter setting each time. This background was to symbolize the idea of “discover” with the concept of someone using a flashlight to explore a dark and undiscovered treasure with a gold surface.

The maps were copyright free from 1812 or were given away for free online and a lot of the lettering was done with a Mac OS X only program called Art Text, which utilizes the built in Mac only graphics feature, that small developers can use to differentiate their programs and be able to sell for a very low price.

I use Toon Boom Studio Express for a lot of drawings, because the limitations of this cheaper version apply to the animation abilities and the draw features are very impressive, especially with the latest version, after they have added most my suggested features. A number of the original images, used for the different website type of content/multimedia sections, were created originally in Toon Boom Studio Express. I then I used the “auto paint” feature, with different settings for each drawing, in Painter (the full version) to give a more natural painted and organic look, to the simple 1 dimensional illustration. Then I brought the image into Photoshop Elements, cut out the white parts, and then applied various artistic filters to

each image. I later added a cut out photograph, I took from living nativity, to each section to make it look more Asian.

3.7 Letters from Family

3.7.1 Dated

2000

3 November 2000

Benjamin,

I am praying for you to get over your cold quickly. Also, remember the Lord is there and wants to help you when you worry about school or other future decisions. He is always there for you. He has also blessed us both giving us each other to love and support. You know you are an inspiration to me. You have helped me to deal with my illness more honestly and practically. I sure am proud of you. We love you dearly.

God Bless, Mom

2003

3 September 2003

Ben,

I found this card I bought for you some time ago. I sure enjoyed seeing you – although we have to work on your kitchen clean up skills!! It is just really hitting me lately that granny is gone. So much a part of my life for nearly 50 years. I know she wasn't always easy – but I guess we weren't for her either. Thanks for being patient with me.

Love, Mom

17 October 2003

Ben,

Thanks for all you did to make my birthday such a fun time. As always your gifts were very thoughtful. You are too generous. It was such a nice family time with the 4 of us. I know you make a great effort because it isn't

easy for you. I want you to know I realize this. I am very blessed to have such a loving and caring son!!

All my love, Mom

2004

8 January 2004

Benjamin, smart “Holy Cow..it’s Christmas again!” and New Years! “Hope your holidays areudderly divine.” a little late!

Love, Mom

24 April 2004

Ben -

Wishing you love, joy, peace and every good and perfect gift from the Lord.

Love, Dad and Mom

24 April 2004

Dear Ben,

Happy 26th! I treasure your friendship each day.

Love, Rebecca (sister) and Taylor, Jack, and Jill

6 December 2004

Hi Ben,

Have fun with your new camera.

Love, Mom

15 December 2004

Benjamin,

Looking forward to spending the Holidays with you!

Love, Mom

2005

24 April 2005

Dear Ben,

This card seemed very appropriate for you. I know we have told you many times how proud we are of you. I want you to know we don’t say this merely in passing. You are truly an amazing individual. You have accepted the very difficult life given to you and handled it with strength and humor – not allowing it to overwhelm you every single day getting up to face the many challenges and pushing yourself to achieve the goals you set. We love

you so much and feel very privileged that you include us so much in your life. May your 27th birthday be as special as you are.

Ben, you are a remarkable young man. You have many fine qualities.

“Follow your dreams; for as you dream, so shall you become. - James Allen”

All our Love, Dad and Mom

20 December 2005

Benjamin,

I couldn't imagine a more loving and fun son. I often think of the gift God has given us in our relationship. Looking forward to Christmas together.

Lot's of love, Mom and Dad

2006

24 April 2006

You are a wonderful son – loving, caring, generous and full of humor. Thanks for sharing your life with us and enriching us both. God has blessed us deeply with the gift of you as our son. We want you to know you fill our hearts with love and pride. Have a wonderful day. Looking forward to our trip to Portland!

All our love, Mom and Dad

8 November 2006

“Thank you 'beary' much for your kindness! I 'beary' much appreciate it.”

I thought Beary would like this card. Thanks for making my birthday so special. I really appreciate and can use the books. I will make up a recipe for you when I am up to it. It is such a joy and special blessing to have a son like you who thinks about me and cares. You are a tremendous encouragement to me.

Love, Mom

2007

22 March 2007

We are so proud of the service you gave to our country. I don't know why you had to pay such a high price.

You have accepted the sacrifice asked of you with such courage and tenacity that I am challenged to reach higher in my life, too. I suppose there is a reason God does not answer all these questions we have of why. When I feel so overwhelmed I think of your faithfulness each day and that nothing, nothing can separate us from the love of God. The love that created us, sustains us, and will receive us home for eternity. Praise God.

Ben,

You are our hero.

All our love, Dad and Mom

Snuggles, Teddy, Sam, and ducks.

22 April 2007

Ben,

Hope you are well by now. All my motherly love and desire to take care of you has been with you. I know you are enjoying your new program. Looking forward to your birthday lunch on Saturday.

Love, Mom and Dad

Rocky and Snuggles

24 April 2007

Dear Ben,

I enjoy our relationship so much! I'm honored to be related to you and I always enjoy the wonderful and intellectually stimulating conversations that we have. Enjoy your last year of your 20's!

Love, Rebecca (my sister)

5 June 2007

A big Moo.....ooo to Beary, Bow, Norm, Patrick, George, Gracie, Little Ben, and Rainbow

Ben,

"Your friendship is a bright spot in my day" It truly is. Your phone call cheers up my whole day. Thanks for being one of my best friends! What a privilege it is to have my son care so much about me. I am very blessed.

Love, Mom

1 October 2007

Ben,

"I don't just dressup like this for just anyone...but you're special Happy Halloween."

Thought you might enjoy these pics. Sorry I've been out of it so much lately. I am really trying to rest up so I can get my strength back. You are such a good friend to me. Your love and support encourage me a great deal. You are one of the joys in my life.

Love, Mom

23 October 2007

Ben,

Thank you for all the lovely gifts. You are so thoughtful and generous with your gifts. I sure appreciate your morning phone calls. They are encouraging to me. Thanks for meeting a real need in my life.

Love, Mom

December 2007

Ben, Beary, Bow, Patrick, George, Norm, and the whole herd

All our love to a wonderful son. We hope this is your best Christmas yet. You are one of God's greatest gifts to us. Your love and sense of humor add joy to every day.

Mom and Dad

2008

17 May 2008

Ben,

Thank you for the lovely radio and book? (I'm not sure if I am to keep it) You made my day so special. I really enjoyed the time with you. You are fun and generous and thoughtful. I am blessed to have such a loving son.

Love, Mom

2009

14 February 2009

"My Son, I wonder if you know how great it is having a son like you...it's always meant so much to me to hear you laugh, to listen to your ideas, and watch you grow...I wonder if you know how proud I feel whenever I get to tell someone, 'That's my son...' What a perfect day to stop wondering and simply tell you. Happy Valentine's Day."

This card said exactly what I wanted to say!

All my love, Mom

2 April 2009

Ben,

We enjoyed the boat trip and the delicious meal. That is the best salmon I've ever had. Bandit had fun, too! It was very generous of you to treat us all. I hope it was a fun Birthday excursion for you.

Love, Mom and Dad

3.7.2 Undated

Valentine's Day

1

Benjamin,

Thanks for being such a good friend to me and a loving son. You are a special young man and it's a privilege to have you share your thoughts with me.

Lots of Love, Mom

2

Ben,

"Lots and lots of valentine wishes- just for being your own loveable self! Happy Valentine's Day"

We miss you. We send you woofs, licks, purrs, and rubs.

Love, Rosie, Sammy, Teddy, and Pippin

Easter

1

He is risen! He is risen indeed 'Jesus told her, I am the resurrection and the life those who believe in me, even though they die like everyone else, will live again. They are given eternal life for believing in me and will never perish.' John 11:25-26 Happy Resurrection Day

Love, Dad and Mom

2

Ben,

Not perfect but I am learning. Thanks for all your help on the computer. You have made things so much easier for me and given me so many programs. Thanks

for all your tech support. I've got my own computer expert whenever I need. You are a patient and very good teacher when it comes to explaining things. Love you, Happy Easter.

Love, Mom

Birthday

1

Benjamin,

Happy 30th birthday to a wonderful son. We are so proud of the man you have become. You are kind and generous, hardworking, caring, tenacious, and growing in wisdom and godliness.

All our love, Mom and Dad

2

I think back on the day you were born. I remember it very well. You cried so much your first 4 months. I always thought it was because you were taken before you were ready to be born. After that you were happy and cheerful. You loved to play with blankets and rolled all over the place. You didn't do much crawling, just rolling and then you walked! The Lord has given me such a wonderful gift in you as my son. You are truly my best friend and it means the world to me. I love you honey. Thanks for loving me. Wanted you to get a greeting on your day. Do something special for yourself – the whole day.

Love, Mom and Dad

3

Happy Birthday, Bow and Beary! Thanks for being such good companions for Ben.

Melissa

4

Ben,

“Bee Happy - It's your birthday - Hope it's a honey of a day”

Have a wonderful, wonderful day

All our love, Mom and Dad

Mother's Day

Thanks for making Mother's Day so special for me. Spending time with you is the best gift! I love the pictures you drew and I can use the devotionals every night – I keep it by my bedside. Next time I see you, I'll be on the mend. Have a great day.

Love, Mom

Mom's Birthday

Thank you for making my birthday so special. Ben, I appreciate all the lovely books. Rebecca, the necklace is lovely. The day was so much fun, too. You both made me feel very special and loved. Thank you.

Love, Mom

Halloween

1

Ben,

"Jack-O'-lanterns brighten Halloween...but you brighten every day!"

This card was just perfect for you! You do brighten every day for me.

Love, Mom

2

Dear Ben, Beary, Bow, Patrick, Norm, and George

"Hope it's a hoot! Happy Halloween"

Looking forward to seeing you soon!

Love, Mom and Dad

Christmas

1

Hi Ben,

Happy new year! I am writing you this note to wish you joy and peace in this new year. I am also writing to thank you for taking out your time to spend Christmas with us. I had a really good time with you and was very glad you could be with us. Not only are we proud of you and your many accomplishments but we also enjoy your

companionship. I really liked the Christmas gifts you bought for me. I use the mug every day and it reminds me of you. We have already used the atlas a number of times. It is good to have a current one. You put a great deal of thought and effort into selecting these gifts.

Best wishes always,

Dad

2

Dear Ben,

Thanks so much for your thoughtful gifts. I love the journal with your logo. I have been doing lots of the cross-words too. They are just right in hardness and I like the variety too. The only ones I can't do are the British cross-words. I don't even understand the clues!! You are always so thoughtful and generous in your gift giving. I had such a good time on Christmas Day. It was a fun time all together, wasn't it? I also thought our dinner at Olive Garden was lots of fun. The Lord has given us something very special in our family. A close, loving and fun relationship is a great blessing and brings me so much joy....God bless you sweetie

Love, Mom

3

Hi Ben,

And hope you like the rabbits. I was looking for cards, and was very happy to find them. All my best to you, Ben. You are a very good fellow to think of, when I do in a day. I know you will feel a very nice Christmas, there in Oregon, close to you.

Love from your Uncle Clive

Thank Yous

Wow, Ben!

I'm really impressed with your accomplishments! You have read widely, related a new (?) of strands of religious thought and expressed your thoughts and feelings visually as well as through poetry and essays you have shared personally and through the Internet. I am glad your generous heart and intelligent accomplishments are now recognized. I applaud you!

Love, Great Aunt Ruth

Chapter 4

Depression, Stress, and Schizophrenia

by Ben Huot

4.1 Causes of Depression

4.1.1 Schizophrenia

One of the things that a person diagnosed with Schizophrenia has to deal with, that most people do not think as related to the disease, is depression. It is not known whether or not the depression comes from the medication, as a side affect, or that it is just part of the illness, because they don't want to have people not take medicine, just so they can prove this, as it is so important to take your medicine, if you have Schizophrenia. Depression is not the most major symptom, but it is important to deal with.

4.1.2 Determining the Cause

Depression has different causes: one is chemical, which requires anti-depressant medications and some are environmental and behavioral. You have to find what is triggering the depression, to find out the effective method, of reducing or eliminating it. People with Schizophrenia can also get depression, because of their common lifestyle, as they are often very poor (due to the fact that they have to live mostly off Social Security SSI, because they usually cannot work full time), isolated by their paranoia (which often causes them to avoid others), and they have difficulty in forming and keeping relationships with others.

4.1.3 Stress

In dealing with depression that is caused by your situation, stress can also cause depression, as well. People often think that they will be less depressed, if they get something important accomplished, but this is not necessarily true. If you do not get enough rest and work too often, this can cause depression as well. I have to be careful not to work around the clock and give myself time off, especially in the evenings, in order to avoid being severely depressed. Watching certain shows and reading certain

topics can cause depression as well (just like they can also cause paranoia).

4.1.4 Keeping Balance

Stress is very detrimental, to someone with Schizophrenia, and can increase symptoms dramatically. One of the biggest reasons why it is hard for someone with Schizophrenia to keep a job, is that their symptoms get much worse, as their stress increases. One of the big things that is important for anyone's health and something someone with Schizophrenia deals with even more than others is keeping balance in life.

4.2 Solving Thinking Problems

4.2.1 Accepting Your Limitations

One of the hardest things to deal with, in having Schizophrenia, is accepting your limitations. You need to accept that you cannot live the way you did, before you became mentally ill.

You also need to tell others, who you spend time around, that you are mentally ill and how you get stressed out much more easily than the average person and what stresses you out. Telling other people about your illness, from my experience, has always improved my interaction with others. Even though whenever someone hears about Schizophrenia on the news, it is almost always describing someone, who has committed a violent crime, people don't treat you like a sociopath, when they hear about your illness. They know very little about it, but don't seem to have a hard time accepting it, or fear you, after you tell them.

It is not fair to expect the same out of a person, who is disabled, as a person, who doesn't suffer from the same disability. Just as a person, who is missing legs, is not expected to walk or a developmentally disabled person is not expected to be really smart, so a person with Schizophrenia should not be expected to be able to live a normal life. Even living on your own and just keeping your house

clean and getting the food you need means that you are excelling. Remember, the Bible never says that we have to run a marathon, write a novel, travel around the world, or run for political office. Being a good person is expressed, in the way we treat others, in our daily interactions, and not in some epic struggle, that people write poems about.

Another thing that is hard to accept about Schizophrenia, at least for me, is that I seem to have to go through periods of time, where things are much more difficult for me. It is important to be patient with yourself, during these times and not expect to get over it quickly, or find a silver bullet, that will resolve all your problems. Having Schizophrenia is a very difficult situation, to deal with, and there are no simple or obvious answers. One of the big problems I have is that I crave being around people, but, at the same time, get very annoyed by how rude people are and have a lot of anxiety about meeting new people, even though they almost always like me.

Another problem many people with Schizophrenia struggle with is that they have to deal with difficult people, who are often abusive (which includes many people who work with the mentally ill for a living). These experiences are so hurtful, that the person with Schizophrenia, thinks long and hard how to avoid these situations and spending this amount of energy worrying about the future is not healthy. One of the big reasons why we suffer as humans much more than animals is that we over think things. We spend too much time trying to avoid or solve problems, that we could deal with much better, if we just accepted them, as a natural part of life. Often times things are easier to deal with, when you don't think about them so much. Another reason why this is harder for someone with Schizophrenia is because they are generally not busy most of the time, as they cannot usually hold down a full time job, so they have too much time to think.

4.2.2 Self Reflection

One of my biggest problems, due to my personality, is also made worse by my having Schizophrenia. This problem

is over thinking things. I self reflect much more than is helpful. While it can be useful to be able to analyze and improve upon your past situations, that were stressful to you, you can also cause yourself unnecessary stress doing so.

Anticipation of future pain increases your amount of pain. If you knew you were going to have a very painful situation or injury to deal with in the future, would knowing this beforehand make dealing with this easier or harder? One of the most common causes of death, in the case of serious injury, is shock and not the injury itself.

One of the ways animals can deal with difficult situations that people cannot overcome is because they don't think a lot about things, before or after they happen. They live in the moment. Much of the things we deal with are actually made worse, by our trying to avoid them, especially when they are inevitable and/or a natural part of life (like death).

One of the best ways, to not reflect on your situation, is to focus on helping someone else, who is in a worse condition. Volunteer work can give you a sense of purpose and a sense of belonging, that can make it easier, for you to deal with your losses and your frustrations. This can also be a place to network with other people ,who have similar interests, or to meet contacts, that can help you find a more satisfying career.

Just giving thanks to God, for the things you have, is very effective, in treating depression. When you are frustrated, without having something you thought you were owed or had earned, and then had it taken away, you can accept this better, if you just think about how you have a roof over your head, or that you have enough food to eat. Just enjoy the feeling of being full, or being at a comfortable temperature can help you relieve stress.

4.2.3 Compartmentalization

My worldview is very holistic and most people would be well advised, to consider seeing the world this way. But, this is not always healthy, when taken to extremes. While it is great to see how things like philosophy, literature,

religion, culture, politics, economics, the environment, weather, history, and art are related, to broaden your view of the world, it can also allow you to jump to some very unhealthy conclusions. Always seeing yourself stacked up against the major world problems can get discouraging very easily.

While most people need to learn more about the world, it is not always helpful to dwell on these huge issues, that affect us on a global scale. As much as we may not agree with the way the world is going, even if we can come to a conclusion as to how to solve the problems, we have no power to implement them. Even the US President has very little power to change things and his role in politics is very limited.

We need to be aware of what things are like in a big picture way, in the course of our learning, but intellectual pursuits can not be our only way of finding meaning and direction in life. As much as we get frustrated by the bad decisions of our leaders and our ancestors, we are not personally responsible for the choices they made. It is not our fault that the world is the way it is and it is not our purpose in life to resolve these issues.

We need to reject the idea that Americans are responsible for what our leaders have done. The only way to approach making the world better is to narrow our focus and limit ourselves, to an area we can affect and are good at. One person cannot turn the tide of history. God is in complete control of our future and He does not want us to mentally suffer, because of other people's bad decisions.

The best way to fight against what is wrong is in how we treat others and by keeping ourselves healthy and in good shape, so that we can help others, in small ways, for more years. What God wants us to do are things that are within our ability and in our reach. We all play minor roles and we need to look to God to put them together into an world changing epic story.

4.3 Work Issues

4.3.1 Keeping Busy

One of the paradoxes about living with Schizophrenia vs. the average person is that, while most people are constantly busy and fighting for more time, for themselves and their families, a person with Schizophrenia often does not work for a living and so struggles to find enough things, to fill up their day. There are different strategies in filling up your time, when you don't spend most your day working.

One of these solutions is to find a part time job (if your disability pay allows for that), or to do as I have done and find a hobby, that takes the same role, as a career. One of the downsides to this is when you do work for yourself, your work never ends, and you don't have a boss, who tells you to go home and get some rest. And if you do your work hobby out of your home, you very rarely get away from it.

Another way to take up time is to spend much of your day gaining new experiences or meeting new people and spending time with people you like. This approach is difficult, because a common way to meet other people is to join a club or another activity, but usually they require you to do some activity, which requires you to do something, that might be stressful. These clubs usually meet on a regular basis, so stress can come from anticipation of future meetings ending badly and also by the stress involved, with getting to a certain place, by a certain time.

Ultimately life is more than a series of tasks to complete, so it is important for a person to realize, that life is about experiences and who you are and cannot be completely fulfilling, if you feel the need, to plan out your entire life. It is important for a person with Schizophrenia, to get plenty of sleep and time to relax. As there is not a job to look forward to doing each day, it is important for them to find a hobby they look forward to doing.

4.3.2 New Skills and Major Changes

Learning new skills or making major changes are some of the more stressful things, for someone with Schizophrenia. Any sudden changes in lifestyle, like going back to school, even just auditing and only one class at a time or things like committing to a club, or volunteer job are very stressful. I also find it very hard, when I have to be, at a certain place, at a certain time.

Trying to learn a whole new skill, even things like drawing or leather working, causes a lot of stress. When I have tried to make a major change, in what I do with my time, in a way that caused me to have to give up writing or my website, I became very depressed. I think any kind of sudden change is bad, for someone with Schizophrenia.

When you do need to make a change, the best way would be to do so in small steps. I am presently trying to get myself to the point, where I can take classes, at the local community college. To get there, I am starting on going to the local YMCA and just paying each day, so that there is a little commitment.

On the other hand, I have been able to do much more, than I could, when I first had Schizophrenia. I now can watch a movie, all the way through, across town, at the movie theatre. I am now able to go to Portland by car. I can do my laundry myself and remember to take my medicine on my own. I wasn't able to do any of these things at first, so my therapy definitely works.

This anxiety about doing new things ties into my understanding of Schizophrenia being, in some ways, like a very extreme form of anxiety disorder. Many people with Schizophrenia have trouble being around other people and often have different kinds of obsessive compulsive disorders. And the idea of gradually increasing your exposure, to what stresses you out, which works in treat anxiety disorders, can also be used with Schizophrenia, by desensitizing you, to what you fear.

4.4 Dealing with Others

4.4.1 Get Out Daily

Another way to deal with depression is to increase your interactions with other people and get outside more. Even going for a walk or just being around other people, in a restaurant or other public setting can improve your mood dramatically. Exercise also helps counter symptoms of depression. Even though exercise may be strenuous, at the time of the activity, it will make you happier the rest of the day.

The medication that deals with Schizophrenia make it more difficult to get out, because of the tiredness, caused by side effects of the medication. But you will have a hard time sleeping and be in mental pain, if you don't push yourself to get out. Even with the trouble I have dealing with obnoxious people, getting out always improves my mood.

4.4.2 Over Stimulation

One of the big differences between a person without a mental illness and one with one is that, when you get depression or psychotic symptoms, you cannot be convinced rationally, that you have no reason to be depressed or paranoid, even though nothing has changed since, before you were suffering and, when you get over it, nothing has changed, either. When dealing with these irrational thoughts, you can often overcome them, with a combination of medicine and lifestyle adjustments. While you cannot change the way you respond to situations by reasoning, you can void the things, that trigger your troubling thoughts, or increase your resistance, to the triggers.

I can easily get overstimulated, by visiting, even with my family, for too long. I often have the TV on, in the background, especially when I sleep, so as to keep my mind distracted from paranoia, but I often have to shut it off, while reading or writing. Overstimulation can cause stress, which can lead to paranoia or depression. It is the opposite problem of not getting out often enough.

One of the ways to avoid being over stimulated is to limit the amount of time you spend in stressful situations. A useful approach to dealing with both over stimulation and depression, from not being around people enough, is to take be out with people, in a number of short lengths of time. You can also deal with this by limiting the number of people you are interacting with. Another way to deal with it is to get yourself used to more stimulation, by gradually increasing the amount of time doing these kinds of activities.

I also have been able to expand my ability to be more stimulated, for a longer time. One of these areas is in movies. I used to not be able to sit through an entire movie, even watching on my TV, at home. I now can go out to the theatre across town, wait for an hour, and watch an entire movie. I used to find many things overstimulating, like listening to music, as I want to hear all the lyrics and think about them.

This strategy of getting yourself used to more interactions is useful in dealing with Schizophrenia, because a lot of symptoms of Schizophrenia are similar to anxiety disorders and obsessive compulsive disorders, but of an increased magnitude. One way to deal with anxiety disorders is to gradually expose yourself, to more stressful situations, like being out in public, for longer and longer periods of time, which is also a common strategy for dealing with obsessive compulsive disorders. One of the ways to deal with obsessive thoughts or compulsive behaviors is to expose yourself to what triggers it, for longer and longer periods of time. Eventually, you get desensitized to it and are then able to refrain from doing the compulsive activity or even thinking about the obsessive thoughts.

Another way to deal with over stimulation, after the fact, or when you cannot avoid it (like having to take medicine, for a long period of time, with unusual restraints, on what you can and when you can eat, or by having to go to doctor's appointments) is do things that release stress, like mild exercise and getting enough sleep. If you feel totally hopeless or stressed out and nothing can help, even though you are on appropriate and sufficient medicine, is to get to sleep and, if necessary, take a PRN, that can

help you do so. Also, exercising can help get you tired and that will help you sleep, as well.

4.4.3 Social Challenges

One of the paradoxes of Schizophrenia is that although counseling and cognitive treatments are not effective in combating the paranoia, delusions, and hearing voices, they can be effective in treating symptoms still present, while on appropriate levels of medication, that are effective. Another thing that people do not realize about Schizophrenia is that there is a whole range of symptoms, that are more disabling, in the context of interacting, with other people.

Another factor that can cause or increase depression in someone with Schizophrenia is the paranoid and delusional perception of how others are relating to you. One way to avoid or lower your stress in these situations is to be able to talk, to someone you trust later and challenge your perceptions. Many times I feel someone has hostile feelings toward me and later my mom explains, that what I perceived was not accurate.

Other symptoms that make it hard to relate with others is that it is hard to find an activity in which I find joy in doing and that I often believe that other people can hear my thoughts. I also speak very fast, as my mind works very fast (it also did before I became mentally ill, but it has increased since then), so that other people have a hard time keeping up with me. I also have difficulty in speaking, because I do not move my lips, do to my worrying that people will read my lips, when I talk to myself.

Another consequence of Schizophrenia is that is easy, for me, to see the negative side of things and this makes it hard to relate with others too. One of the ways of helping avoid or lessen depression involves being positive and optimistic. My mind naturally goes to the worst case scenario, for every activity and I often make doing simple things unbearably complex and challenging, because of this perception of reality.

4.5 Rest and Recovery

4.5.1 Getting Enough Sleep

One of the things that is very difficult keeping regular in their life, for someone with Schizophrenia, are sleep schedules. Keeping a set sleep schedule affects many things in life: it makes it easier to get your medication at the right time; it helps you keep to a schedule, keep disciplined and balanced, in how you spend your time; and it keeps your internal clock working more normally, which can make your life much more healthy. Most people with Schizophrenia have trouble sleeping and the medicine often makes you so tired, that you never feel rested, no matter how much sleep you get.

Not getting enough sleep is a sure way to get severely depressed. One of the best things to do, if you are getting very depressed and nothing seems to help, is to sleep. You can get a PRN (as needed) medications, that can help you sleep, and exercise can make you tired as well, when you need to get more sleep.

4.5.2 Relaxation

One of the really difficult things to deal with, when you do not have a job, is that you have too much time on your hand. In the past, my strategy was to do work constantly, so that keeping busy would help me not be aware of my paranoia, but when I cut back, as I no longer was able to keep working, at that level, I experienced severe depression, on a level that I have never experienced before. And the level of depression I am fighting now is much more painful, than suffering from severe paranoia. It hurts so much, that I have to find a way to get rid of it soon.

One of the really important ways to deal with stress is to make time for taking part in doing things that you enjoy. Part of fighting depression is finding things to do when you are down. When you have something to look forward to, you can feel more upbeat and positive. A good way to relax is to find a hobby, that does not require a lot

of emotional energy and helps pass the time, without being accompanied by stress.

Some of the really difficult things to deal with, for me, in finding hobbies and things to do, with other people, is that I do not have a car and I do not do well in the evenings. I also ride the bus, so it is hard to get transportation in the evenings and on the weekends. I also do not want to take on any more responsibilities, that often accompany joining a club. I also get stressed out, if I make a commitment to a particular activity and get a lot of paranoia and depression, after signing up for a class or financially committing to a gym. The combination of all these factors complicates my search for relaxing and enjoyable activities for many years.

In finding a new hobby, I have decided to pursue arts and crafts, as I enjoyed doing them as a kid. I also enjoyed exercising, when I was in high school, so I am starting that as well. I also enjoy meeting people, so I have found some less intense books I can read while at a cafe, so that I can have more time around other people. Finally, I have decided to try going to start watching plays, as I can now watch full movies and get inspired by these kinds of activities.

4.5.3 Contact with Animals

Another good way to deal with depression and lower stress is to have contact with animals. Just petting animals can lower your blood pressure. Animals are a lot of work, but there is no substitute for a furry animal that loves you no matter what.

Animals are: completely genuine, are totally honest with you, and love you, no matter what you accomplish, how much money you make, how good looking you are, or what your social status is. All an animal wants from you is: to be kind for it, feed it, and give it enough room. Dogs particularly will spend all their days waiting for you and they adapt to almost any kind of situation, as long as you are there.

Chapter 5

Positive News about Myself

by Ben Huot

5.1 The Cause of My Epiphany

5.1.1 The Books

2 Books

I wanted to thank the authors of 2 books, for their help in my epiphany, as well as the Holy Spirit, who is my muse and inspires in me the words to write. The first book is *“Christian Beliefs” that Can Drive You Crazy: Relief from False Assumptions* by Dr. Henry Cloud and Dr. John Townsend. The second is book is *Eat, Pray, Love* by Elizabeth Gilbert. There is a movie coming out soon, that stars Julia Roberts, based on the book, with the same name. Elizabeth Gilbert is probably the person most emotionally similar to me, that I have ever found (at least in a currently living person).

She is Like Me

She was raised by workaholics, taught to be totally independent and self reliant, she is very intelligent and spiritual, as well as being a gifted writer and teacher. She has trouble relaxing, accepting her limitations, and being patient with herself; she worries too much about things she has no control over; and she is a very talkative and likable person. She also suffered from a year of depression, like I just have, and is within a couple years of my age.

How We are Different

The things different about her is she lives in New York City, she is a world traveller and has a great network of friends, she follows what some call the Perennial Philosophy and has studied in the Indian Religious Tradition, and she has been married before. The other big difference is that I am a disabled veteran and have lived with Paranoid Schizophrenia for over 10 years. I also don't have a movie made about me.

How the Book Affected Me

I found her book to be a very fast read. I read her book in about 3 sittings. I found her book very easy to read and a very worthwhile read. She helped me to come to several epiphanies about myself and discovered what core issues I need to work on. I feel guilty, that I don't have to work for a living and so have kept myself constantly doing work mainly in reading and writing books. As unbelievable as it sounds, I would greatly prefer working a job, even if it was only minimum wage, then have Schizophrenia, but I was never given a choice.

5.1.2 My Problems

My Veteran's Pension

As far as the veteran's disability is concerned and even how I left the military were both under very unusual circumstances. I left after 13 months, in the space of 5 weeks, with an honorable discharge. Even when the military knew about my mental problems, they wanted me to stay. It bothered me, for a long time, how people who have been burned seriously, often get less of a veterans pension, than me, but as my mom says, I have given my mind for my country. There is a good reason why I get more money, than people with physical disabilities. It is very hard to get any pension at all, as it costs a lot of money for the government, and they are very selective about who gets a pension and how much they get.

My Limitations and World Problems

It is very hard for me to accept my limitations. I wanted, before I became mentally ill, to be an international business man, working in the distribution side of marketing. I had to scale down from this, after I left the military and became mentally ill. I still felt responsible, to help out the world and try to at least speak out about all the injustice in the world. It bothers me greatly, that we in America live the lifestyle we do, because we are living at the expense of those in the Third World. Our lives are as good

as they are, because we have taken away, from other people, whose lives have been made worse, as a direct result.

What Drove Me

Just living independently is a great achievement for someone, with my mental illness, and I have also written 50 books and I am only 32. I have pushed myself tremendously, to get this done, because of the uncertainty of our future. Even before I learned how precarious our situation is and how easily we can go back hundreds or even thousands of years in technology, if the price of oil increases too much, I knew that the world as we know it may not last long. I am even more concerned about our future, if we do find enough energy, to continue our world economy, as some of the new technologies made possible will give people too much power and it will then be too easy, to abuse the situation.

I am Not Responsible

I also have a hard time being patient with myself. I need to accept that I am only responsible for myself and only need to worry about my actions. And it doesn't matter what other think of me or what I do. I need to accept where I am and who I am. I need to expect less out of myself. Just as people do not expect diabetics to eat too much candy or developmentally disabled people to do brain surgery, so I cannot expect myself to be able to do things that increase my stress. I already have done more than most people accomplish in a lifetime and I should be happy with where I am now. There is no need for me to worry about world problems, as I did not cause them, cannot change them, and am not responsible for them.

5.2 My Life

5.2.1 Where I am Now

Finishing Up

I have been looking for new directions in my life, for the last few years. I finished my independent study of the humanities and I have suffered from severe depression, for about a year and found out finally, after trying everything else, that I needed a change in my anti-depressant. I ended up stopping writing for a month and got my iPad. I just finished writing the last of Technical Collection and Book of Lists.

Things to Write About

I also have had some time to think about things, while I have been avoiding the news and other types of TV and movies, that cause depression or paranoia. I have moved to another part of town, so can get out on the weekends now. I have finally thought of some new things that I wanted to write down. Some of this inspiration comes from talking to my family about some of the world problems we are facing and I found a very encouraging book, that showed me that I have bought into some very common Biblical sounding ideas, which I acknowledge are wrong intellectually, but I still believe on an emotional level.

5.2.2 What I have Learned

Normal to Fail

I have finally accepted that it is normal to be in pain, to fail, to sin, to not have progress for a while, or even regress. I now know that the reason why God gave me some of the big problems I have had to deal with, at a young age, that few people have to deal with, is that the thing that scared my most was becoming arrogant. But I have so many problems, that I never have to worry about

that. I have finally accepted where I am and am ok with it. I think I really am happy and at peace now.

The Psychological Approach

I have realized that a skilled Psychologist is the best approach, to my problems and that it might be best to stay away from churches, as I believe that they contain more negativity and are the source of more problems than they help with. I am not alone in thinking this and believe that this is the best way to improve my relationship with God. I think for me to live like a life that is patterned by Biblical teaching I need to avoid the Church and focus more on my emotional and physical well being.

Why Wait to Get Antidepressants?

There are several reasons for why I did not ask the doctor to change my antidepressant medication at first. One of the reasons why is that depression can be caused by different things and psychiatric medicines only work when the symptoms are caused by a chemical imbalance rather than behavioral/lifestyle causes. Another reason is that I also suffer from Schizophrenia, so I take an anti-psychotic medicine as well. On the simplest level the anti-psychotics work as sedatives/tranquilizers and so they make you more tired and generally bring you down from your excessive thoughts and the antidepressants often do the opposite and keep you from being depressed by elevating your energy and mood. Often times an increase in the antidepressant can work against the anti-psychotic medicine. Another reason is that I suffered from what I can best describe as a combination of both depression and paranoia, which is supposed to be impossible.

5.3 My Core Problem

5.3.1 Exploring the Problem

Recognizing the Obvious

My core problem is that I am a workaholic and all through my writings I talked about the mystical aspect of Christianity, the importance of rest, and the importance of humility. I understood all of that very well in an intellectual manner, but have just began to accept these ideas on an emotional level. I am one big paradox as we all are. But realizing that life is based on paradox is not sufficient – we need to look for the correct aspects of these paradoxes. I have thought of being either a mystic or being an analytical person as I saw in the paradoxical relationship of Taoism and Confucianism. I have learned a lot about both of them but it has been hard for me to take the best of both.

Obstacles to Taking a Break

The Bible speaks about this a lot, but people with my personality and background miss the main point, which appears to us as a very subtle idea. There are various reasons for my feeling this way, including how I became so serious after serving in the Army and having a very serious and difficult disease to deal with in my diagnosis of Schizophrenia. For people who know little about this illness, it does more than just cause paranoia, voices, and delusions. It even goes farther than causing apathy, having inappropriate expressions, depression, very strong anxiety and obsessive compulsive disorders which all make it hard to get along with others. It goes as far as making it difficult for the person with Schizophrenia to even find joy in doing anything. I didn't find out about this last part, until this last year and that, in addition to my study of survival topics, was a big part of what made me feel so seriously depressed for such a long time. The anti-psychotic (Schizophrenia) medicine causes many, including myself, to be completely exhausted constantly and to never feel rested up. Often the person has to choose

from the pain of trying to stay awake during the day or the pain of paranoia. This is even on the newest medications. They just aren't as smart and focused as there developers intended.

Negative Social Factors

A lot of people who suffer with Schizophrenia are so pre-occupied with dealing with the paranoia which is rarely overcome due to people not being able to accept that they need to take the medicine. It also doesn't help when so many people use the word crazy as being a way of describing someone as being worse than evil or as an insult when they disagree with you. It also doesn't help when someone with a mental illness commits a crime and although it is not politically correct or socially acceptable to attribute their motive to be based on race, age, or physical handicap, it is considered acceptable to attribute their motive to mental illness. It also doesn't help that whenever someone has Schizophrenia on a TV show or movie they are always violent criminals. And one of the most destructive thing people say who have used psychiatric medications that didn't need them tell everyone that it is a sign of weakness or personal failure to be taking psychiatric medicines.

I feel that being as rational as I am while having Schizophrenia is more painful (not just mentally but physically as well) because I see really understand what it is that I lost due to my disease.

5.3.2 Finding Possible Solutions

Enjoying the Process

So what I have finally realized, which probably is very obvious to the average person, is that Christianity is not defined by a certain result, but is rather a process. Just as the means determines the end (while many people say the end justifies the means), so doing good works to become closer to God is having everything mixed up. We are supposed to grow, by God working in our lives and the fruits

of this may be good works. Being a Christian is exactly that, being, rather than doing something. God wants use to grow spiritually, emotionally, and intellectually, as well as take care of ourselves physically. I think we are finally realizing that there are a multitude of things that interact with each other, that form who we are, just as there are many aspect to what produces a healthy nation, or a healthy social group.

Bettering Ourselves

I think Christians are too focused on fighting an outside spiritual evil. We go out, as if to war, when we should rather focus on self improvement. People are given much more freedom than evil spiritual forces do and the battleground is mostly in our minds. We need to break our desire to do what we want and rather decide to do what God wants. This is the real battle. For people like me (who are more like Martha than Mary Magdalene) following God means that we are taking care of ourselves, but doing so by faith in God's power, over time, with other people and not try to do everything ourselves. Excessively doing good works doesn't get us anywhere spiritually, if it destroys us physically an/or emotionally.

Relaxation Strategies

I think one of the things that has kept me from spending time relaxing is that I like to be busy doing things. It is very hard for me to just sit and do nothing. I think that it would be good for me to combine some activity, that doesn't use my mind, with relaxing. One of the reasons why I wanted to join the military after high school was that I was so overwhelmed by all the work in high school that I looked forward to not having to use my brain for a while. And my inability to motivate myself to relax probably goes back to my experience in the military, when I was never able to relax, because I never felt safe.

5.3.3 Reasons and Motivations

Overworking isn't Biblical

For those unwilling to do anything for themselves, think of it this way. The Martha approach is like that of the Pharisees. If you think that you need to do more than others, then you think of yourself as better than others and if you think that these good works are necessary to improve society, then you are saying that God needs you. Either way, excessively doing good works, to improve yourself or to help others, is a sign of arrogance and sinful pride. You are also not a good witness to others, when your example implies that it is not possible to both be happy and to follow God. And, eventually, you will be locked into a very miserable existence or else you will give up God. It would be better for you to give up on your projects instead. And by pacing yourself and by giving yourself resting time, you will actually be more productive, in what you can accomplish for God.

Bible Teaches Rest

Not only is overworking unbiblical, but there are many examples of resting in the Bible.

The first is that God rested on the first day, after He created the world.

Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them. And on the seventh day God ended his work which he had made; and he rested on the seventh day from all his work which he had made. And God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it: because that in it he had rested from all his work which God created and made.

¹

The second is one of the ten commandments: the sabbath.

¹Genesis 2:1-3

Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work: But the seventh day is the sabbath of the LORD thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates: For in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the LORD blessed the sabbath day, and hallowed it.

2

Third is the command to let the land rest on the 7th year.

And six years thou shalt sow thy land, and shalt gather in the fruits thereof: But the seventh year thou shalt let it rest and lie still; that the poor of thy people may eat: and what they leave the beasts of the field shall eat. In like manner thou shalt deal with thy vineyard, and with thy oliveyard.

3

Fourth is a command called the Year of Jubilee.

And thou shalt number seven sabbaths of years unto thee, seven times seven years; and the space of the seven sabbaths of years shall be unto thee forty and nine years. Then shalt thou cause the trumpet of the jubile to sound on the tenth day of the seventh month, in the day of atonement shall ye make the trumpet sound throughout all your land. And ye shall hallow the fiftieth year, and proclaim liberty throughout all the land unto all the inhabitants thereof: it shall be a jubile unto you; and ye shall return every man unto his possession, and ye shall return every man unto

²Exodus 20:8-11

³Exodus 23:10-11

his family. A jubile shall that fiftieth year be unto you: ye shall not sow, neither reap that which groweth of itself in it, nor gather the grapes in it of thy vine undressed. For it is the jubile; it shall be holy unto you: ye shall eat the increase thereof out of the field. In the year of this jubile ye shall return every man unto his possession. And if thou sell ought unto thy neighbour, or buyest ought of thy neighbour's hand, ye shall not oppress one another: According to the number of years after the jubile thou shalt buy of thy neighbour, and according unto the number of years of the fruits he shall sell unto thee: According to the multitude of years thou shalt increase the price thereof, and according to the fewness of years thou shalt diminish the price of it: for according to the number of the years of the fruits doth he sell unto thee. Ye shall not therefore oppress one another; but thou shalt fear thy God: for I am the LORD your God. Wherefore ye shall do my statutes, and keep my judgments, and do them; and ye shall dwell in the land in safety. And the land shall yield her fruit, and ye shall eat your fill, and dwell therein in safety. And if ye shall say, What shall we eat the seventh year? behold, we shall not sow, nor gather in our increase: Then I will command my blessing upon you in the sixth year, and it shall bring forth fruit for three years. And ye shall sow the eighth year, and eat yet of old fruit until the ninth year; until her fruits come in ye shall eat of the old store. The land shall not be sold for ever: for the land is mine; for ye are strangers and sojourners with me. And in all the land of your possession ye shall grant a redemption for the land. If thy brother be waxen poor, and hath sold away some of his possession, and if any of his kin come to redeem it, then shall he redeem that which his brother sold. And if the man have none to re-

deem it, and himself be able to redeem it; Then let him count the years of the sale thereof, and restore the overplus unto the man to whom he sold it; that he may return unto his possession. But if he be not able to restore it to him, then that which is sold shall remain in the hand of him that hath bought it until the year of jubile: and in the jubile it shall go out, and he shall return unto his possession. And if a man sell a dwelling house in a walled city, then he may redeem it within a whole year after it is sold; within a full year may he redeem it. And if it be not redeemed within the space of a full year, then the house that is in the walled city shall be established for ever to him that bought it throughout his generations: it shall not go out in the jubile. But the houses of the villages which have no wall round about them shall be counted as the fields of the country: they may be redeemed, and they shall go out in the jubile. Notwithstanding the cities of the Levites, and the houses of the cities of their possession, may the Levites redeem at any time. And if a man purchase of the Levites, then the house that was sold, and the city of his possession, shall go out in the year of jubile: for the houses of the cities of the Levites are their possession among the children of Israel. But the field of the suburbs of their cities may not be sold; for it is their perpetual possession. And if thy brother be waxen poor, and fallen in decay with thee; then thou shalt relieve him: yea, though he be a stranger, or a sojourner; that he may live with thee. Take thou no usury of him, or increase: but fear thy God; that thy brother may live with thee. Thou shalt not give him thy money upon usury, nor lend him thy victuals for increase. I am the LORD your God, which brought you forth out of the land of Egypt, to give you the land of Canaan, and to be your God. And if thy brother that

dwelleth by thee be waxen poor, and be sold unto thee; thou shalt not compel him to serve as a bondservant: But as an hired servant, and as a sojourner, he shall be with thee, and shall serve thee unto the year of jubile: And then shall he depart from thee, both he and his children with him, and shall return unto his own family, and unto the possession of his fathers shall he return. For they are my servants, which I brought forth out of the land of Egypt: they shall not be sold as bondmen. Thou shalt not rule over him with rigour; but shalt fear thy God. Both thy bondmen, and thy bondmaids, which thou shalt have, shall be of the heathen that are round about you; of them shall ye buy bondmen and bondmaids. Moreover of the children of the strangers that do sojourn among you, of them shall ye buy, and of their families that are with you, which they begat in your land: and they shall be your possession. And ye shall take them as an inheritance for your children after you, to inherit them for a possession; they shall be your bondmen for ever: but over your brethren the children of Israel, ye shall not rule one over another with rigour. And if a sojourner or stranger wax rich by thee, and thy brother that dwelleth by him wax poor, and sell himself unto the stranger or sojourner by thee, or to the stock of the stranger's family: After that he is sold he may be redeemed again; one of his brethren may redeem him: Either his uncle, or his uncle's son, may redeem him, or any that is nigh of kin unto him of his family may redeem him; or if he be able, he may redeem himself. And he shall reckon with him that bought him from the year that he was sold to him unto the year of jubile: and the price of his sale shall be according unto the number of years, according to the time of an hired servant shall it be with him. If there be yet many years behind, accord-

ing unto them he shall give again the price of his redemption out of the money that he was bought for. And if there remain but few years unto the year of jubile, then he shall count with him, and according unto his years shall he give him again the price of his redemption. And as a yearly hired servant shall he be with him: and the other shall not rule with rigour over him in thy sight. And if he be not redeemed in these years, then he shall go out in the year of jubile, both he, and his children with him. For unto me the children of Israel are servants; they are my servants whom I brought forth out of the land of Egypt: I am the LORD your God.

4

Then there was Elijah who was given food and rest by an angel.

But he himself went a day's journey into the wilderness, and came and sat down under a juniper tree: and he requested for himself that he might die; and said, It is enough; now, O LORD, take away my life; for I am not better than my fathers. And as he lay and slept under a juniper tree, behold, then an angel touched him, and said unto him, Arise and eat. And he looked, and, behold, there was a cake baken on the coals, and a cruse of water at his head. And he did eat and drink, and laid him down again. And the angel of the LORD came again the second time, and touched him, and said, Arise and eat; because the journey is too great for thee. And he arose, and did eat and drink, and went in the strength of that meat forty days and forty nights unto Horeb the mount of God.

5

Jesus and His Disciples rested.

⁴Leviticus 25:8-55

⁵1 Kings 19:4-8

And the apostles gathered themselves together unto Jesus, and told him all things, both what they had done, and what they had taught. And he said unto them, Come ye yourselves apart into a desert place, and rest a while: for there were many coming and going, and they had no leisure so much as to eat. And they departed into a desert place by ship privately.

6

Christ has Already Won

I have felt like I need to fight, to struggle for what is right. I often imagine myself dropping out of a plane and parachuting to a battle, when I think of what might be my ultimate fate. But Jesus Christ already defeated the devil. Christianity has successfully spread beyond Europe and now outnumbers Islam 2 to 1, with most of those still practicing indigenous religions preferring Christianity over Islam, even though Islam had a thousand year head start and Christianity has only had a hundred years, in most parts of the Non-European world. We also are not responsible for the conversion of others to Christianity. God brings people to himself. We may be able to be a good witness, but it is not our responsibility beyond that. Only the disciples and those called to the ministry are charged with spreading the Gospel.

5.4 Being Without Doing

5.4.1 The Solution

By God's Grace

I have realized that the way that we become is not through doing. And the way we become more Christ like and mature as Christians involves 3 aspects: us being willing to change, God giving us maturity as a free gift by His Grace, and allowing time for this to take place. Praying

⁶Mark 6:30-32

ourselves as well as having other pray for us will enhance this effort.

God Does all the Work

The reason why it works this way (that God does the whole thing by Himself once we give Him permission) is because this is how God chooses to work with us. Despite are lack of belief in the power of the spiritual in our lives does not mean God is not constantly defying physical laws, to the benefit of those who want to serve Him and to bring others to Himself. Just as God has chosen for us to become righteous enough to enter Heaven, by our faith and His grace, again with God doing essentially the entire thing for us, so He will do almost everything needed, for us to mature in a similar fashion, if we would only consent to His desire to do this.

5.4.2 Spiritual Laws

Different Rules

Most people have a very flawed understanding of how God works and why things happen the way they do in the physical world and we also have a poor understanding of the spiritual world, which makes the former seem more confusing. The way we see the world from our human vantage point, we see throughout history that when one group of people becomes more powerful through technology, economics, weather, or any other factor it dominated the other weaker group of people. The spiritual world also has laws and things also work according to a predictable pattern, but the pattern is different, because of the different rules God governs this realm by.

How Americans Think

One of the big reasons why the US is hated throughout the world and we get ourselves into unwinnable wars is because we don't study history. Many of the same groups, who feel discriminated against and marginalized, did the

same thing to others earlier on in history. The US needs to understand, that there are no good guys and in many parts of the world, so we need to choose between the lesser of two evils, or just not get involved. The only other alternative is to occupy a country, for at least a thousand years and the US is not likely to exist in its present form that far in the future, nor does our country have that kind of patience and resolve nor is it unwilling to make the sacrifices necessary for this to happen.

5.4.3 Real Freedom

God Values Our Freedom

Many people have a poor understanding of God's perspective, motivations, and personality. Great thinkers often spend their entire lives trying to explain why we suffer, when God is all powerful and also perfectly morally good in nature. In America believe we really value our freedom. We think that freedom comes from having more choices and less restrictions in life. But God really values true freedom, especially of people, and God also likes to use people, so that people can be in control of their future.

Why and How Bad Things Happen

God allows bad things to happen, because all these things all arose, from our rebellion against God. God created everything, so that it worked together perfectly. We then screwed it up, by our decision to follow what we assumed was our own will. Many people might also wonder why, if there are powerful evil spiritual forces in the world, why have they not already enslaved us and why we have waited so long for the End of Times. In the spiritual world, God greatly restricts what other spiritual forces are allowed to do. God allows people much more latitude. That is probably why the anti-Christ is a person and why a lot of powerful people are trying to advance technologically and corrupt people morally – they are not allowed to do as much spiritually, so they take the physical approach.

Acknowledging Reality

Our true enemy though is not an outside force, but ourselves. What we need to worry about first is our own lives and how we treat others. We need to “submit to God” which is really a bad approximation, because God already is infinitely powerful and controls everything that happens. How do we really praise God, when the best things we say about God are not flattering, but factually true. To submit ourselves to God is really only about acknowledging reality. What we need to do, to allow God to work in our lives, is to accept His help. So salvation is not so much about faith or about repentance per say, but really just acknowledging what we already know is true.

Only 2 Choices

The only thing we need to do is to ask God to rule our lives and for His will to be done in us and not our will. Some people would say this is not freedom and they are allowed to follow, what they think is their own choice. But there are only 2 choices spiritually: serve God or serve money (the devil). Just like in an addiction, what feels right is not always best for you, nor are you always in control, when you have your own way.

5.5 True Humility

5.5.1 God’s Perspective

The Other Side of Humility

I think one of the things that has held me back in my spiritual growth is that I saw God’s desire for us to be humble as Christ was as a one sided equation, where we know we have blown it so bad, that we have no reason to have a high opinion of ourselves. I thought of it as that basically all our problems are our fault. The other side of the equation, which I am only now discovering is that God does say that we have failed, but because of His choice

and His grace, we are given direct and supernatural help, to become better people.

God Doesn't Want us to Suffer

God doesn't just judge us and then expect us to become more moral, by our own effort. God only wants us to be humble, so that we are willing to ask God for help. God allows things bad to happen to us, but we do not grow by becoming more willing to deal with pain, because we have learned to be more patient and persevere. The reason why God allows problems in Christians' lives is to get their permission to enter their lives, so that God can remove the obstacles and strengthen us, by His grace, so that we learn to stop trying to do everything ourselves.

God's Objective

God is not trying to discipline us, with punishments, like some parents have or the legal system does, to get us to behave better. God has realized that we can't do things by ourselves and so He wants to help. We are worthy of being happy and at peace, not because we earned it, but because God decided to take the penalty Himself and gave the ultimate sacrifice. So even though we are not highly esteemed, by our actions, God does value us more than the protection of His Son (who is also God Himself).

5.5.2 Living a Happier Life

What is Life For?

We are not just to endure life, but to have a happier and more peaceful life. We don't deserve this, but God has decided to give this to us, because He chooses to. A Christian's life is not supposed to be a constant struggle, with no time for rest and recovery, but rather a meaningful and positive existence, where despite our failures, we have hope and the ability to improve our lives (but only by God's divine intervention). God gives us things to do, that we cannot do, not for us to fail, but for us to ask for

help. It may be surprising to many people that despite our terrible track record with responsibilities given to us, God really enjoys being with us and is willing and able to take the time, to change anything in us and in our circumstances, to make our lives better.

Consequences of Free Will

We will never get the credit, but we can have better lives. It is hard to understand why God doesn't just force us to do what is best for us. But God values our freedom and is unwilling to give that up just so that things work out better. God wants us to make the right choices, but ultimately sees us as adults and wants us to choose of our own free will, because love cannot be forced. We are allowed to make bad choices, only as a logical consequence of having the ability to love God and His creation, while still retaining a free will.

Enjoying Life

God doesn't want us to settle for good enough. He doesn't want us to just grin and bear it and just stay alive, because God doesn't want us to commit suicide. Neither is our life's purpose to get some project completed or to help so many people. When we die, the only things we take with us are our identity, personality, and our memories. The most important thing we can do in life is to first be honest as to where we are at, then to learn more about God and get His help, and finally to have a good relationship, with the people we know. If God really wanted us all to be perfect, at any cost, He wouldn't have given us a free will.

5.6 Problems with Theories

5.6.1 Background

I Love Theories

Most of what I write about is not about practical things, but rather theory. I am a person who loves working with ideas and I am very creative about it. I make mosaics of ideas by combining pieces, that I have cut out of other theories, much like people cut out pictures in magazines to make a collage, or people make scrapbooks out of photos. What I do is like a kind of abstract art.

How I Write

You may wonder how I plan out what I am going to write about and stay disciplined to write on related topics. But I was never good at making outlines and I have learned in school to think in complete sentences and to write very rapidly. This makes it possible to write, without having to be disciplined about it.

Writing Style

I write what I do directly and then fix it for typos, but I never rewrite or re-think what I have written. I very rarely throw any of my writing away or rewrite something. I can also keep the idea in my head long enough for me to get back to my house, so that I can write it directly in my word processor. I don't keep a list of things I want to write, as this stresses me out. This approach actually creates a problem for me in writing books, in that I never know when I am finished with them.

5.6.2 My Theory on Theories

Bad Theories

Many people do not like studying theories, as they find them very impractical. I did not feel this way about philosophy though, but the reason why I think people feel

this way is that many theories are not a very accurate explanation of reality. I read somewhere (I think in reading some of the philosopher Hume's writing) that reality is the truest judge of any theory. If you ever run into a situation where the theories you learned about it are not useful, then the person who taught the theory needs to rethink it and develop a better theory.

Reason for Failure

One of the big reasons why theories fail to help explain reality is that they don't allow for failure, contradictions, and inconsistencies. What people think is often not well explained by philosophy, because philosophers are too consistent and rational and people aren't. We philosophers often strive for perfection and this ends up not being very useful, to those who study philosophy. I think it is hard to reconcile the way the world works with any theory, because there are many factors that influence the major events, that happen in the world, over the course of history and there are also many factors, that determine why people decide how to respond, to the situations that they were born into.

People are Different

Whenever you try to explain history or an individual's beliefs, by finding just one theory developed from just one perspective, it often fails. One of the problems with reducing people and history down to one theory is that people are very different and things that work for one person, in one time of history, in one situation do not necessarily help another person, in a different situation. I recognized early on that in my writing that I needed to explain things differently, for different people, with different strengths, weaknesses, and situations.

My Approach

I also realized that I was setting myself up for inevitable failure, if I asked for followers, because I could not predict

what someone else would get inspired to do, from what I have said. That is why I have asked people to use my writing to inspire them, but to decide on what is important to them by themselves and not try to take an approach that works for me and expect it to work for them. You can also feel responsible, for people abusing your theories, if you try to convince other to believe the same as you.

Opposite Problems

This is the problem with trying to get different people to approach problems in the same way: it doesn't work, because often some people have exactly the opposite problem of other people. Just like people have very different tastes in music and different sense of humor and often don't appreciate different styles, so it is hard for a person to understand how someone else has entirely different needs and problems than another person. It is interesting that, when people asked Jesus what to do to be saved and go to Heaven, Jesus told everyone to do something different than everyone else.

5.6.3 The Biblical Approach

More than a Philosophy

There are a few things that I believe are absolutely true, which the Bible is very clear about, but most things in the Bible are not that simple. Just as Buddha gave different kinds of people different advice, based on their level of understanding, so the Bible is not arranged, so that we can make a detailed theory to consult, to solve our problems. There is no way we can find a philosophy of the Bible, because it is more than a philosophy. The Bible is the word of God, simplified so that we can understand it, but it was designed to work for billions of people, over at least thousand of years of history. That is why it is not easy to explain everything in the Bible by one theory.

Relationship with God

It is often said so many times, by a certain type of really intense Christian, that the Bible is about a relationship with God. I cannot argue with this as there is a good deal of truth to it. But there is more to life than just relationships and that is not the only way to approach God. I think too many people dismiss large portions of the Bible, thinking they are outdated and are not useful for them to study. I also think many people make what God asks of us too complicated.

Point of Life

God simply wants us to be happy. He wants us to live better lives and become better people. But trying to find some sort of goal is missing the point. The best way of understanding the eternal perspective of God, that I know of, is to think of God as existing in a kind of eternal moment. Living is a process and consists of a variety of experiences and dealing with a variety of emotions and situations.

What God Wants

God wants us to experience His presence in the world and not worry so much. God doesn't require us to know something specific, or attain a certain level of faith or of understanding of theology. Being a Christian means that you decide things for yourself, based on a lot of different types of information. The Bible is the most important one, not because it explains everything, but rather that everything it says is true and accurate.

Who God Is

We can always depend on God, but God will never be able to depend on us. A relationship with God is not like a close friend, where you are complete equals. God is not a drinking buddy. He is our Lord and Savior. We need to understand that, in dealing with God, we need to have a sense of wonder and awe about Him, revere Him, and we

need to express this by living serious lives, and in taking things like sin seriously.

Take Life Seriously

When we see Jesus as God, we need to understand that God is also God the Father and God, His Holy Sprit. God definitely does have a sense of humor, but God knows that there is a place and time for it and does not elevate having fun at the expense of our safety and well being. There is a reason why the Bible is not very funny. Life is an experience and the only things we take with us are our minds, emotions, spirit, and everything else that we can't see. We need to focus on what is everlasting and we need to do this by maintaining a balanced existence, just like God is balanced.

5.7 Being Realistic

When people are young, they all think they will be famous and that they will be able to solve all the world's problems, all by themselves. I used to want to be famous, so that I could help solve world problems.

5.7.1 Working with People

The Reality of Fame

The thing is that when most people become famous, they are only famous for a short period of time, which is often not at the end of their life. This sets up a situation, where you are going to experience a low of the same magnitude of your high. That is the same reason why drugs cause depression and destroy people. Another thing about fame is having a lot of money. But wealthy people have the same problems everyone else does. In fact, for people making over \$50,000 a year, an increase in wealth does not improve the person's life.

Romantic Ideals

I think we also have unrealistic expectations of others, that we have relationships with. One of the big reasons for divorces among young people is that they expect too much of their spouse. You have to be happy alone, before you can be happy married. Everyone has habits that will make you angry and they will fail you when you need them most. The only one who will unconditionally love you and consistently be there for you, when you need them, is God. The closest thing we can find in physical form is an animal.

Hard to Meet People

I used to be upset and feel myself to be a failure, because I have a hard time finding friends. But I am not the only one. In fact, this is quite common. It is ironic that, in a world filled with ways to communicate instantly and continually, with almost anyone for almost no money, we actually feel more lonely than ever before. The Internet, as many have found out, is a bad way to meet people.

Problems with Virtual Dating

The biggest problem with meeting people first online is that people lie, when they can get away with it. The idea of sharing intimate ideas with someone, before you meet them, is not a good way to start a relationship. I want to see the person first, so that I can find out basic things about them, like whether they are a woman or a man, instead of investing all sorts of time and emotions in someone, who could be making up everything and you have no way of being sure it is not a scam or a stalker.

Finding Friendships

I also have more problems forming relationships than other people, as I have trouble getting to things that start at a certain time repeat in a schedule. I get tired very easily and I have a lot of anxiety about how I will get along with other people that I don't know. I feel bad that

I don't know more people, but when I see people in public, who work at the places I buy food from, or I see on the bus, I would rather be alone than be around these people. My sister said the other day that it would be really easy for her to find a bunch of really annoying friends, but that the hard part is finding people who are worth getting to know.

Lack of Maturity

I would like to marry someone in their twenties, but I think it is unrealistic to expect someone of that age, to have the maturity, to stay in the same marriage, for the rest of their lives. Most women over 30 are single today. I think most people marry young and then get divorced, before they start to even get to know who they are and what they want out of life. In the past, people were more mature at a much younger age, but today people seem to mature, at later and later dates, as time goes on. Most religions consider this time in history to be one of the most immoral and corrupt.

5.7.2 Anxiety for No Good Reason

Downsizing Our Lives

I think it is also unrealistic of us to think that we can continue to consume more and more resources and to not pay back our debts, while continuing to increase them. The earth is a finite place. There is only so much water, so much energy, and so much room. The way of the future will be to downsize our lives and have simpler and more basic ambitions. We can change the world, in our homes and in our lives, and we need to narrow our focus on this area, and not worry about the decisions everyone else makes.

Problems with Journalists

I think one of the problems with the liberal counterculture media and even the mainstream conservative media

is that they are too negative. All we hear all day is the problems. Maybe reporters should stop brining up problems, without giving possible solutions for them. I think one of the reason why the alternative media is so negative is that they expect the common person to give up something for the greater good. And then they are unwilling to work with religious groups, which are the vehicle, for many of the positive developments, in the world today.

We Worry Too Much

At this point, most people are so overwhelmed by our problems and are so busy just trying to keep their jobs, that they get discouraged very easily. If you knew how your life would be 10 years from now, would you really want to know? I think it is unrealistic to expect that we will never get sick again or be depressed or in pain, but knowing about it before then is just unbearable. We need to spend less time worrying and more time enjoying what we do have.

Why Life is Short

Most people will not live past 80 and this has been the case throughout history. And the reason for this is that life is only manageable, for a certain number of years. We are not designed to sustain ourselves, beyond this period of time, in the world, the way it is now. And trying to extend your life does not increase your happiness. Many people now worry about dying, because of heart disease or cancer. Maybe it is ok that we finally die of something. Maybe dying of a heart attack is not the worst way to die. Maybe this is actually progress.

The Cost of Being Healthy

Many scientists now think that we would be healthier and live longer by eating a near starvation diet and work out intensely. Most people have lived this way, throughout most of history, and the people that could afford to not do this, didn't follow that route. Being overweight was once

the sign of healthiness and wealth. We also worry about getting fresh air and getting a certain amount of sunlight. We want to travel and vacation outside and in a warm climate.

Staying Inside is Good

There is a reason why people decided to live in a controlled setting, in houses, and in living in the same place. Living a life out in the elements and living off the land is very difficult and the land can only support so many people. Civilizations were able to start when people settled down together and started living off agriculture, instead of hunting and gathering. The populations increased and the first cities started, because they could finally produce enough food, to sustain a large population.

The Best Location

What people don't often see, about these supposedly ideal tropical islands, is that most people who live on them want to live on the mainland. In the tropics, the bugs are bigger, more aggressive, and more poisonous. Most people, if they lived in somewhere outside of carefully maintained hotels, in these tropical climates, in the third world, would realize that living in a temperate climate, in the US is actually one of the best climates to live in. The most rapidly growing cities are ones, where they are big enough to have things to do like concerts and plays, but small enough, to avoid major inner city problems.

Chapter 6

How to Respond Positively

by Ben Huot

6.1 Stop Getting Mad

6.1.1 Why They Hate America

Unpredictability

One of the things that makes people hostile to America is not that we are worse than any other empire or even that we are not really promoting democracy and equality, but that we are more than any other thing terribly inconsistent and unpredictable. Many nations are also unstable, but they don't have the most powerful military in the world, in addition to being a very globally aggressive country. People don't know whether the US is going to be involved in the Middle East, support Israel or the Palestinians, is fighting terrorism or Islamic fundamentalism, is going to intervene to prevent unstable regimes from getting nuclear weapons, is going to be a friend or foe of Russia, is going to support or undermine communist China, or is going to work through the UN or going to fight wars unilaterally.

Naive Americans

As I said before, many Americans are very naive about global politics. One of the things that Americans don't understand is that all the problems we are experiencing in the Middle East are not our fault and existed long before America was even a British colony. Another thing we don't seem to understand is what we call democracy the rest of the world calls Imperialism.

Find Out Why

We don't really understand that not every country has a political will and infrastructure, and military and economic base to support a liberal democracy like ours. When getting involved in things we have little knowledge about, we need to find out why those who made the decisions, that they did, in the past, before we make a major change

in our approach. This is certainly true of not only politics, but also true of almost any situation.

6.1.2 Lose-Lose Situation

We Lose

When we don't have the patience, or the will, to stay in a country, for a thousand years or more, before we overthrow a government, we need to find supporters, in the region, that can stay in power, when we leave. It is not in the interests of either the United States nor the local population in having democracies in the Middle East outside of Israel. The reason why the US doesn't want more democracies in the Middle East and has helped support dictators like those running Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Pakistan, and formerly in Iraq is that we know that the local populations would vote in terrorists as their leaders, if given the chance to vote.

They Lose

The US and Saudi Arabia want to smooth over this reality and not emphasize this situation, as it makes things difficult, for both our countries, if it is announced on the nightly news. Right after the World Trade Center was bombed on 9/11, the Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza Strip were celebrating in the public streets. Osama bin Laden is revered as a hero in the Muslim world. The Palestinians voted in the Hamas terrorist organization into power in the Gaza Strip. When we invaded Iraq, and the Shiites grabbed power in Iraq, the few Christians still in Iraq suffered worse under them, than under Saddam Hussein. And people think that Bush was loyal to Christians.

6.1.3 Money is Power

Money=Politics

The reason why the people in the Middle East don't want democracy is that is just another word for Imperialism.

We say democracy, but what we mean is capitalism. American democracy means more of their kids are getting addicted to MacDonald's restaurants and Playboy magazines, in the middle of the holy city of Mecca. We think of ourselves as so different from the colonial powers, but we were allied with all of them and helped them keep their empires, before they lost them, over the last 50 years. The exact same oil companies, that controlled Iraqi oil, when the British owned Iraq are the same ones that control it now. Like any addiction, just because someone indulges in it doesn't mean they want their kids doing the same, or even wants to keep being controlled by it.

Money Runs the Media

American entertainment culture, the media, and the marketing departments of the major multinational brands have the power they do, because they have got people all over the world addicted to their products. Do you really think that you are saving money, by having advertising pay for your TV and newspapers? Do you think that even though the only legal responsibility of a CEO is to make as much money, for its shareholders as possible is going to sacrifice profit, to help the environment or to be non-partisan, in their news reports?

6.1.4 Recognizing the Problem

Cost of Advertising

Do you really think that newspapers are not a business, like every other and that they are run and controlled, by those who pay their salaries, meaning the advertisers? It would be much cheaper for us to buy our media, than support it with advertising. The only reason why companies are willing to give away free entertainment or news is because they know that you and your children will spend more money on their products, than you would spend paying, for the free Cable programming.

Keeping Kids Safe

Just like you don't want your children's values destroyed, by their exposure to sex and violence, so parents of those in the Middle East don't want their children exposed, to this same American culture. When American tanks role in, shortly behind them come Coca-Cola, Disney, Playboy, Time Warner, Nike, Mac Donalds, Walmart, MTV, and all the other top multinational corporations start appearing next to mosques and holy sites. When Muslim men see how typical American women on movies dress and behave, the rights of women in the Middle East go backwards about a thousand years. We like to think that you can separate money from politics, but it doesn't matter what you think, because they all own your souls and so you will think whatever the advertisers on the American media tell you to believe.

Unequal Politics

Do you think that the current conservative-liberal political divide in America was not invented by mass media corporations? Isn't it surprising that liberals are elected, when the economy goes bad and bail out corporations and that conservatives get in power, when the economy is going well and remove all rules for corporations and give them the seed money, to gamble away, and this money on both situations comes from middle and working class Americans? Why is it that you can steal the retirements of millions of people and not go to jail, but if you rob a convenience store, you serve big time in prison? Why is it that most people who are in prison are poor and most convictions are from plea bargains?

6.1.5 The Solution**Divide and Conquer**

The way to beat this thing is to stop watching the news. The way we are manipulated, by the big corporations, is when we get mad at what happens, in politics. Why aren't moral liberals and moral conservatives on the same side?

Why aren't social liberals and fiscal conservatives on the same side? Did you know the best way to destroy a country is by siding with one local group and against the other one and then the remaining ally is slowly exterminated?

Stop Getting Mad

Let stop trying to change others minds and start focusing on liberating our own souls. If something happens in the world, that you need to know, they will stop the TV and the radio and break into tour shows or games to announce it. And after you have been watching the news for a while, you will realize it is a waste of your time, because nothing ever changes, year after year.

6.2 Everything is Useful

As it says in Ecclesiastes there is a time for everything and every skill and every person has a place of value.

6.2.1 For Individuals

Personality Traits

Some of the personality characteristics, that are considered to be negative, have a positive side and vice versa. The same people, who make good leaders and can be depended on, for their strength of character can also have problems with anger and have control issues. People who are moody and perfectionists often have surprising abilities like passion, perseverance, and commitment to a project. People who always make jokes and are silly can be very encouraging and optimistic, in situations, where others would break down.

Useful Skills

Some of the things that are valued the least are sometimes the most necessary and useful, depending on the situation. A manager may not have what is considered practical skills, when it comes to building something, but

they will prove to be useful, when you need to organize people and solve relationship problems. A computer programmer may not seem important in a survival situation, when electronics break down, but they might be able to use these skills, to solve engineering problems. An engineer may look down on a machinist, but they may need to work together, to complete the building of a machine.

The Most Important

The most important jobs in society are farmer, sanitation worker, truck driver, and the people who maintain the power lines and the pipes that bring us water and electricity. The first thing that needs to be cut in a difficult situation is often the person at the top, rather than the workers. We may not need many people with farming knowledge right now, but if our technology fails, we need to know how to make a plow.

6.2.2 For Society

Don't Cut Taxes Now

Many people may feel that the police are a waste of money, or that they don't need hospitals, because of their good health. But even when things you don't use yourself stop working, the systems around you, that you do depend on, cease to function properly, when even an unrelated service is interrupted. Just like people who use computers don't need to worry about the technical details, when things break down, you need someone who does have this knowledge. People often want to save money, by not buying insurance, but then are surprised that the police usually don't recover stolen items. People rarely value janitors, until there is a sewage leak and things need to be sanitized.

Every Service is Essential

This is the situation we are in now, where businesses and government decide to cut non-essential services, when the

economy goes bad. But the problem is that most government services are necessary and are often preventative measures, that are only visibly necessary, when they are stopped. And they are often more expensive and may take considerable time to restart them. Just like when you are on certain psychological medicines and then you feel better and stop taking them, by the time you then realize what they were doing for you, it makes it that much harder, to restore yourself to your previous state.

The Downside of Efficiency

What makes our society so easy to break down is that people are just doing enough, to keep things going, when everything works fine, so that money is saved and the system is as efficient as it can be. The problem with pursuing efficiency is that your infrastructure becomes brittle, when it does not have fallback support and extra insulation, to protect from those unusual times, when society needs more than is expected or something else fails. When I was in the military, many things were starting to be done by computers, which had previously been done manually, and I remember many of the NCOs were concerned about relying on computers, because everybody knows that computer break, when they are needed most.

Everything Fails

When building and maintaining infrastructure and basic government services, we need to plan and expect things to fail and develop solutions, that need to be maintained, for when things inevitably fail. Just because it is unlikely that most cities other than New York City, Washington D.C., and Los Angeles will be attacked by a terrorist, the severity of the possible damage makes it worthwhile to plan, for this possibility, in every major city.

Preparing for the Unlikely

There are many things that can be done, to prepare us, for things, that are very rare, like asteroid impacts, su-

per volcanoes, or natural disasters, in areas where they were not expected, but they require a tremendous investment, which only pays itself off, when you end up not having to spend as much money, to rebuild after the disasters. New York city doesn't get hurricanes very often, but when it does the glass used in most skyscrapers cannot withstand even minor hurricane winds, and so this would cause enormous loss of life, injuries, and damage, if people are unwilling to invest the money, to replace them with stronger glass.

6.2.3 What You Can Do

Necessities Not Glamorous

Just like the news reporters focus on cars chases and fires, because they look exciting on film, so society seems to want to focus on spending money on exciting things and often decides to pass on the necessary, but unglamorous things. This is one of the reasons why it is good to have survival supplies in place, before disaster strikes. Even in areas that are hurricane prone, most people wait until the last minute to buy supplies and the stores empty in a matter of hours of everything.

Don't Procrastinate

We always see on movies about the elite military and government agencies, that are tasked with preventing catastrophic events, like nuclear wars, that they wait until the very last second, to prevent the disaster. If the Department of Defense really did everything at the very last possible moment, it would continue to run into times, where they had a delay and we would be living in a post apocalypse world tomorrow.

Prepare Now

Everything is necessary, at a time, when you don't think you will need it. Always prepare for the unforeseen events, that are going to happen, at any time. The time to prepare, for living without an income, or outside help and

without basic services, like modern plumbing and electricity is now. If you wait until it happens, it will already be too late. There is a reason why the kids you called nerds, in high school you call boss, later on in life. Responsibility and preparation pay off.

6.3 Affecting Change

6.3.1 Learning Helpful Concepts

Memories and Attitude

Just as life is more than choices, ethics is more than how you treat others. The most important things in life are our memories and our attitude. This means that we need to focus first on our own lives and find peace and joy within who we are and what we do with our time, before we can expect to have fulfilling relationships with others. God comes first, but your family comes before your community or your country. It is better to be family man than a patriot.

Realistic Ambitions

One of the reasons we get to the point, where we have no more energy and are completely without hope, is that we are unwilling, to scale back our ambitions, to what is realistic. Having more power gives you no more influence, as you sacrifice the degree of influence you have, by extending how the number of people you influence. Who influences your child more: you or the President? When we look to expand our lives into new frontiers, the largest frontier is the human heart.

Mind Body Connection

We often see reason and emotions and mind and body as being opposing forces in our lives, but everything in our lives influences everything else in our lives. Having good self esteem can help you be more rational and getting enough sleep increases your spiritual health. Just as

the people, who have the most important jobs are often the least powerful, so aspects of ourselves that we take for granted are the key to our complete health.

Stop Doing

When we think that changing our lives involves buying something or joining something, maybe the answer is to cut back and do less. We often think to transform our mind, that we need to read books, but maybe the answers to our problems are not intellectual. Sometimes taking a nap or watching a movie can give you a better insight, just because you allowed yourself time to think.

6.3.2 Starting with Ourselves

Changing Our Own Minds

We spend so much time increasing our resumes and our relationships with others, that we often forget about how important our own well being is, in creating a better life. To change the world we need to first change our own mind. The most important factor in our growth as a complete person is often a series of experiences over a long period of time. Sometimes being a man of action requires a person to first be a thinking person, in order for the actions to be beneficial.

Time to Think

We spend too much time worrying and too little time allowing our mind enough rest, to work through all possible solutions. Getting enough sleep can be more important than psychological therapy. The way to improve our lives lies less in what we do and more in how we think about it. Having a job you do not like, while having a lot of free time may be better than enjoying your job, but not having a break from it.

Attitude Trumps Action

Instead of sending more money to the United Way, you may affect greater change by volunteering in your community. Sometimes we are so focused on the tangible influences like sending letters and canvassing door to door, that we don't realize that way we make members of our families feel when we talk to them. There is more to charity than how many people you help.

Thinking for Ourselves

When we learn new things about ourselves, we often focus on acquiring knowledge and forget that we need to spend time thinking and this second part is the more important, in our emotional growth. Stopping doing something harmful to yourself can be more useful for your self improvement than doing more to help others. When we only spend time on how others perceive us our relationships will become more shallow and less meaningful to our lives.

6.4 Learning to Say No

6.4.1 Total Situations

Definition

I have narrowed down the precise reason why I am so intense and serious. I got so serious because of my total experiences. A total situation or experience is where you are in a situation where: you do not want to be there, you have no power or choice over what happens to you, you cannot leave no matter how much pain you are in or how scared you are, you are in the situation 24 hours a day, there is no break or relief, and other people are the ones who make all your decisions for you.

My Situations

Most people never have this kind of experience, but, if you do, it will change you profoundly. My total situations in-

clude: my time in the military, being in the gas chamber during basic training, my stay in the psychiatric ward of a private hospital, when I lived in a group home, and when I lived in a retirement home. You can never really appreciate your freedom and having legal rights, until they are taken away from you.

Psychological Impact

I think these experiences made me feel like I didn't have any control over my life, so it drove me to continue to work hard, to create something that I did have control over. It was hard, for me, to take breaks, because I found that I was able to deal with my total situations, by focusing my whole self on something else and taking a break made it harder, to keep my mind off my situation. I think setting limits on myself will be empowering and help me feel more in control, even though it is me that is making the decisions, because I am not really in control, when I have an addiction to work.

Truth in Experiences

Just like when I ran, I didn't focus on running, but rather thought of other things, because I found running to be boring and painful, and I used the same strategy in these total situations. This desire to be in control of my own destiny also made my appreciate being an adult and being able, to make my own decisions, over how I spend my money and my time. I remember during basic training, I was happiest when I was running, because the drill sergeants finally stopped yelling at me and gave me some space during that time, probably because I was fast enough, by their standards, so that they had little to say.

6.4.2 Limits

Everyone has Limits

When people asked for my help in the past, I felt that I should always help, but I am finally ok with saying no.

Everyone and everything has its limits. When I was living in a retirement home in my mid twenties, everyone thought that I worked there and constantly came to me for help. Anything I would do for them was basically pointless as their memory only lasted for about 5 minutes. I think that the CNAs on staff at night may have been tempted to just not give the residents pain medicine or help them with whatever problem they had, because they would ask again 5 minutes later no matter what you did.

Limits Improve Relationships

When giving money to people, either homeless or not, the people you are helping tell others and continue to ask, and become increasingly aggressive, until you finally say no. It is not good to loan money to most people or even give someone money to buy something for you. I remember that one of the guys living in my quad, while I was in advanced training, in the military, I gave him money to buy me some boots, when he went to help the drill sergeants trade in the clothes, that we were issued during basic training, if they did not fit. He never bought the boots and never returned the money and it ruined our friendship.

6.4.3 Humility Requires Weakness

Pace Yourself

Everyone has his limits even Jesus and his Disciples left the crowds, they were ministering to, on occasion. If you allow people to push you too far, then you will end up resenting them and your attitude will be so bad, that it would be better to do less and be positive about it. Everyone needs time to rest and recover. You cannot just do good deeds continually, without pacing yourself, or you will give up and become bitter. It takes a tremendous amount of discipline to stop helping, when your focus is entirely on getting things done.

Be Patient with the Process

Life is a process and not an outcome. Service only needs to be one part of your walk with God. If it becomes the focus, then you will destroy yourself eventually. To grow spiritually, we need have the patience, to allow God to work with us and ask for other people to help us. We are not islands and we cannot just go into a cave and meditate non-stop. We need to balance our service with rest, fellowship, worship, and prayer.

It's Ok to Have Needs

This idea that we can be happy, if only we had more discipline, is a very destructive and biblically wrong attitude, that many people in churches perpetuate. It is ok to be weak and to need others and God. This is what being humble is all about. Our life as a Christian needs to meet our needs, as much as we need to meet the needs of others. You can only be spiritually strong, when you are emotionally and physically rested and balanced. Before you can be of use for others, you need to strengthen your own body and mind.

6.5 Little Things Matter**6.5.1 We Worry Too Much**

When people want to change the world, they often set their sights too high. Then, when they inevitably discover, that the world is the way it is, for a reason and powerful people actually want it to be the way it is, they realize that things are not so easy to change. I think many also find some exciting new theory, which they think will cause a revolution and have a hard time being able to embrace a more subtle and complex worldview. Most people are afraid of and hate change and with change there is always a risk of things getting worse. But nowadays Americans are so beaten down, by current problems, that we have trouble seeing the big picture.

6.5.2 Assault on Christianity

Focused Attack

American Christians are even more worried about the future. They believe that people will find the church irrelevant in these times. Christians have taken a beating, for the last 300 years or more, from all directions, in academia. These ideas are not coming, from individual people and it is not a coincidence, that so many people were coming up, with such a well thought out plan, to destroy faith in Christ. This was a spiritual battle, that played out in academia. I think one of the reasons why academia was chosen was because the Church, in all its original sects, including the Latin, Greek, Syriac, and even modern Protestant based Christian churches were all very committed to education. The Church became the center of learning, everywhere is existed.

Ok to Bash Christians

It seems that the only acceptable prejudice is to denigrate the Bible and Christians. People who pride themselves on being rational and objective, use entirely emotion-based reasons, which based on their personal experiences, to make Christians seem as backwards and irrational as possible. Academics have gone to such great lengths, to make it sound like Christians have caused all the problems in this world, that anyone coming from another planet would think our intellectuals were not very bright or logical.

Being the Scapegoat

Some for these often repeated messages are factually and historically plain wrong. As I have said a number of times, Rome is not the original church, is not true to the theology of the early church, and European civilization is based on the Enlightenment and on the Greek and Roman classics and has nothing to do with Christianity. Most Christians are not white and that was true throughout most of Christian history and European and American

leaders have not ever followed the Bible, especially not for the last hundred years. Europe did not reject Christianity, because it caused world problems, but rather Europe caused world problems, because they rejected Christianity.

Factually Wrong

Christianity was not bad for the environment either – the Bible says that humans are responsible for taking care of the environment and the prophets talk about environmental disasters, in the future, that were caused by sin. It never says anywhere in the Bible that the world is flat, that the earth is the center of the universe, or anything racist. These things all came from ancient Greek thinkers. Christ was never in India, nor is what Jesus said based on Indian or Chinese belief systems. Isaiah gave a complete and accurate prediction about Christ before Buddha, Lao Tzu, Confucius, or Socrates was born. Most of the major Indian religious, cultural, and literary writings were written down well after Christ was born.

Christianity Won Anyway

But despite all these denigrations of the Bible, Christians, and Christian theology, more people are Christians today than ever before. Pentecostalism and Catholicism are successful international phenomena, that are popular across at least 3 major continents, with very few white people. Christians outnumber Muslims 2 to 1, in the third world and most of the areas with mostly muslim populations converted hundreds of years ago. Christianity only arrived in most parts of Africa and the Orient a hundred years ago and the practices and beliefs of Catholic church in Latin America, for hundreds of years now, is only superficially Christian. And most Africans were converted by other Africans.

6.5.3 Spiritual Battle

Finding Small Solutions

So many Christians and Americans in general are worried about the future and at the same time have no big solutions, nor the power to change things, nor even to have our voices heard. But little acts of kindness, manners, and civility make a big difference. We often feel we are not making a difference, because we do not count everything we do, like the small things, like holding open doors, for other people, or saying thank you. Most of the big political events in history are the result of spiritual warfare and are only one part of the picture. The most important battle goes on in our own minds. The attitude with which we do our work is more of a witness than a televangelist giving a sermon, to hundred million people.

Ok to Be Emotional and Weak

The big reason why many people do not become Christian, or drop out of the church, or the faith is not because they do not believe in the Bible, or find it important in their lives, but that Christians are so negative and unrealistic about what they expect of their members. We can make a difference in the world today with very humble acts, that we may never see the results of. No one is going to thank the person, that was the final straw, that led them to Christ. We have to realize that Christianity is not a science and we need to understand how God works and His power through faith. Faith can only exist, when you have no sufficient rational explanation for something.

Focus on Relationships

Having a relationship with someone is more powerful than sending lots of money to charities. People are much more influenced, by their friends, than their political or church leaders. It takes time and patience, to really make a difference in someone's life and there are no shortcuts, to real spiritual and emotional growth. It is worth our whole lives, to save just one person, or improve just one

person's life. Individual people coming to faith in Christ are more important than which party controls congress or our nation's foreign policy. A few Christians praying together affect more change than all the political leaders in the world.

See with Faith

Stop seeing with your eyes and hearing with your ears. Dream bigger than saving the world. Save yourself and your family. That is the greatest achievement. Stop limiting yourself to the physical world and the rational reasons for your situation. We can only see what really matters through faith and God prefers to work, through people, who have no power and no abilities, so that He gets the credit. We never have to deal with things alone and God wants to fight the battle for us, if only we would open our hearts to Him.

Chapter 7

More Insights and Inspiration

by Ben Huot

7.1 Dealing with Self Esteem

7.1.1 The Military

As I have said before, I think that my continued study of psychology, compared to studying other things, will give me the best opportunity, to grow emotionally and be a happier person. I believe that my greatest enemy is myself. I believe that the most important factors in how I live my life are the choices I make. One of the things I have realized over time, that causes my great stress, is my low self esteem, coming mostly from my experience in the military.

Soldier with Schizophrenia

I always was more sensitive, than most people, and held onto things others did to me, for too long and was overly occupied, with what others thought of me. But in the military, these situations became much more intense and my emotional response became ingrained, much deeper. A lot of my motivation, to try to make life more fair for myself and others, comes from some of the extreme circumstances, that I had experienced, while in the military. Like most people, I already knew what was important to me, so that later in life, most experiences just re-enforced, what I had believed all along.

Also, as a person with Schizophrenia, the main disability that I have, which covers most symptoms, is that everything in my life is exponentially more emotionally intense, than it was for me beforehand, or it is for others, like me, in similar circumstances, that do not have Schizophrenia. Some of the things in the military, that caused my great stress was my fear of even tear gas and my constant failures, to be able to perform the combat skills correctly, while under such extreme stress.

Recognizing Ranks

An even bigger stress was, for me, to recognize and correctly respond, to the correct rank of the person walking

by me (you only salute officers and you have to use the correct exact rank, when referring to the soldier, whether enlisted or officer - if you get this wrong, then you get into a lot of trouble and are publicly embarrassed). One of the reason why this was so hard for me is that the ranking system works different, depending on service, but also the ranks, for enlisted, are on the upper arm and for the officers, on their shoulders or on their lapel.

This makes it very hard to see what their rank is, when you pass by them. You constantly need to know the rank of everyone in the room, at any given time. This is because the highest ranking person in the room has to tell everyone, to stand at attention, whenever an officer comes in, or stand at ease, whenever an NCO comes in.

Rifle Training

I realized soon on, that if I was in a combat situation, that I would be of no use. I remember, when we did the manual of arms (this is how you learn how to move your rifle, in a marching formation, which also helps you keep your rifle away, from being pointed at others, during basic rifle marksmanship target practice), I had to drop for push-ups, after each move, because I would always get it wrong.

I was so bad at shooting (although I had to shoot and qualify, with my left hand, even though I am right handed) that the drill sergeant gave me the spot on the test range, where it was rigged, for the farthest target to pop-up and do down and it count it as hit, no matter if I hit it or not (when you qualify with the rifle, you shoot at targets, that look like green soldier outlines, which pop up for 3-5 seconds and then go down, to simulated the difficulty, of hitting a moving enemy soldier).

7.1.2 Coping with Stress

Deflecting Criticism

There are many coping mechanisms people, who have low self esteem, use to cope, with their relationships with

other people. Some of the major ones are minimizing, blaming, non-competing, overachieving, inflating, and projecting. I use a lot of these, to cope with my low self esteem.

Basically, I try to find a way to deflect any kind of ranking, because I want to find equal relationships and am not interested in fighting for control. Arrogance is what bothers me most and I link that with leadership and any kind of hierarchy or ranking. But it would be good for me to be aware of this, because at an extreme level, this will make it harder for me, to meet new people.

Biggest Deflectors

Probably the ones I use most is non-competing. I am very good at a lot of things, but I never have the ability to perform under pressure. That is one of the reasons why I never enter any competitions, or take any tests or classes, to prove my abilities.

I also would say I overachieve, which is partly because I really care about the future of humanity and the rest of the creatures that live on this earth, but also I constantly run into people, who tell me my life is easy, because I don't work.

Other Deflectors

I also use minimizing as a strategy, because I often find that others will challenge me and say that I am wrong, because they disagree with me, even though I have more experience than them. I don't wish to get in an argument, to prove what I know, partly because I don't think of good responses, while I am under stress.

I think I do projecting often, too, as for most people the things, that bother me most, about others are things I don't like about myself. I don't like anyone who is loud, intense, and controversial.

7.2 Dealing with My Illness

The symptoms of my mental illness expound these problems. One of my most disabling symptom of Schizophrenia for myself is paranoia. I think that people are against me or that they can hear my thoughts. I worry that people will reject me and and that is why I have a hard time making new friends or find new hobbies. In the military I took lots of risks, so now I am very careful not to risk anything important and I over emphasize this, in my mind.

7.2.1 Power Issues

Avoiding Abuse

I also see people sense my fear as a weakness and abuse that knowledge, which happens with abusive mental health workers. These people think that I won't or can't speak up for myself, but, of course this isn't true. Whenever I run into a situation where a person is abusive, I leave the situation, as soon as possible.

There are lot of people on the bus, that are looking for an easy target, to solve their problems, so I keep an unpleasant expression and do not make eye contact. Old people are the worst, in my experiences, and I don't mean retired people, but people who cannot even walk and are very rude and thoughtless and expect everyone else to stop what they are doing and sacrifice their time and energy, to help them.

The most traumatic situations I had to deal with all occurred for me as an adult. My parents weren't perfect, but they did a very good job and I am still friends with them to this very day. My sister and I did not get along well when we were kids, but she has been a close friend, since we became adults. The traumas I experienced are what I refer to as total situations.

No Control

A total situation is where you have no power and no control over almost everything in your life and you have no

way of getting out of it, nor is there any break from it. These are situations in which I never was able to relax, or trust the people in power. The total situations, that I dealt with were in the military, being voluntarily committed to a behavioral psychology ward in a private hospital, living with 9 other mentally ill men in a group home, and living in a retirement home in my mid twenties.

These situations reinforced my sense of wrong and right and my commitment, to do all I could to bring social justice, to the poor and persecuted. They have also permanently altered how I see others and myself, so that I now am able to appreciate even small freedoms in life. It has also convinced me to be very risk adverse and to not trust other people, especially people in the mental health establishment.

7.2.2 Breakdown of Trust

Chemical Weapons

I felt helpless in the military because I had no control over my freedom. I felt that I was lied to by my recruiter. I specifically asked about the NBC training and its possible use in wars. I was told that none of our enemies would use it and that the gas chamber doesn't hurt at all and you only have a little trouble breathing for half a minute.

When I went into the gas chamber, we had our protective masks on at first and I could feel my hands burning terribly. Then we were told to take off our masks and open our eyes all the way. I felt like I was drowning in fire and I could barely breathe. My lungs and my eyes hurt the worst. When I got in my platoon was in the last group so as they added another stick of CS gas for each platoon, we then had the highest concentration. We were in for only 5 minutes, but it felt like an eternity.

My Psychotic Break

I asked to be let out when it was my turn to leave, but the drill sergeant threw me back in to the end of the line.

I found out later that you have to go through the gas chamber once a year for active duty soldiers. Other soldiers in my platoon later said my experience sounded like a bad trip on LSD. Later on I found out that during the first and second Persian Gulf wars that the US military expected to be gassed and the front line troops all went in in full MOPP4 gear (protective masks and chemical suits).

This time in the gas chamber was when the Psychiatrist reviewing my pension case for the VA said that my mental breakdown and first paranoid episode occurred. The military is actually the most common stressful event that brings about a mental illness if you have a high genetic probability, meaning close family with the same mental illness.

Lessons Learned

When people vote for wars in the Middle East, they need to understand that the chemical weapons that will likely be used in future conflicts, are many times more painful than CS gas, by factors of 100 or 1,000, and most often they are not fatal, although most would likely wish to die. People wishing to serve in the military need to understand this very well. The only reason why we do not have as many deaths as in Vietnam as we do in Iraq and Afghanistan is that we keep people alive, that are so badly burned, that they would have died, of their wounds, in any other time in history.

My situation, where I was able to leave the Army, with an honorable discharge, and receive a full pension was a miracle and I would be in Iraq or Afghanistan to this day, if my pension was not approved a few months before September 11th. All enlistments are 8 years long and the military can call you back at any time, especially if you have a specialized skill, or they don't have enough troops. Everyone, who passes through basic training, is considered first and foremost an infantry soldier and no matter what speciality you have, you will be on the front lines, carrying that special equipment, in addition to your combat gear.

Mental Health

I often have trouble making relationships because I do not trust other people. It takes a long time for someone to gain my trust. I am especially untrusting of people in power over me. I remember what it was like to at once point to be honest and let them help me and the next thing I knew I was locked in and couldn't leave. When you admit to having emotional problems, you quickly lose your rights and another person gets to decide what you are allowed to do and what kind of freedom you have.

You lose control over how you spend your time, what you can eat, where you can live, where you can go, and most importantly they are in control of your access to your medication. The people are paid very little and have almost no knowledge of mental illness. It is common for them to never believe anything you say and they are attracted to this field because they enjoy having power over others.

I will never seek help when I have an emotional crisis, because of how I was treated by the mental health caregivers. My latest experience going to the hospital when I was severely depressed, I was put in a padded room and told I could not leave with nothing to do and a camera focused on myself. When I am depressed, locking me up is just going to increase my stress and my emotional pain.

7.2.3 Other People's Problems

Taking Advantage

I am quick to say no to others and am not very friendly, when I am walking on the street or waiting for the bus, because I know that when you appear weak, people take advantage of it. If I see someone in distress, or someone asks for anything, who I don't know, I always refuse and, if I can, get away as fast as possible. I have learned the hard way, that many people are opportunists and have various scams set up, to make easy money and profit from nice people, trying to help out. Just because I see someone

who is dressed in rags or can barely walk, I know that it is likely a trick.

Too Good to Be True

Whenever anything I read seems too good to be true, and I cannot find enough information about it online, then I stay away from that group. I used to try to find another person with a website that is from a Liberal Christian point of view, but all I have found is people mixing Paganism with Christianity, social liberals, or the Christians involved in the paranormal. Whenever I read something about an interesting scientific discovery like quantum mechanics or string theory, new abundant energy sources, or environmental solutions all paths lead to very dark and disturbing places. I have found out that most things alternative are either very depressing, anti-Bible or both.

Religious Boundaries

I think most of the good things going on in the world are done by Christian groups and that there is a good reason why so many Evangelical organizations have decided to be very narrow theologically and conservative socially. When people get creative with theology, they have no sense on what areas they should stay away from. I guess I have a good understanding of what the Bible says, so I know very well what is clear and what is not. It seems pretty obvious to me, but most people don't research the subject well enough, before making major decisions, that will affect the rest of their lives, like joining groups, purely based on personalities they like. There are certain decisions, that you cannot just undo like: sexually transmitted diseases, drug addiction, committing crimes, and making poor decisions, in other aspects of their lives.

7.3 Going Forward

7.3.1 My Decisions

Leaving the Stage

I have learned, to be happy, without taking major risks, in my life. I know that this part of America is the best part of the world and I have no desire, to see the destruction to the rest of the world and the injustice and violence, that is only intensifying. I have realized, that no one cares about what I say and people do know what to do, to solve the major world problems, but the reason why they won't take these steps is that they would require giving up things, that they are addicted to and cannot imagine living without. I don't know the future, but I won't be surprised if the future looks more like the past, and it might be the best thing for us.

Internal Growth

That is why the path forward for me is focused on making my life, my home, and my family the best it can be. Just as the monks of the Eastern Orthodox church decided to withdraw, to the wilderness and pursue their relationship with God and forsake worldly ambition, as Christian Constantinople fell to the Muslim Turks, so I end my criticism of my generation. I am only responsible for myself and my own actions. Whatever happens to the world will happen, as the result of the collective decisions we make, and even more directly, as God moves it.

7.3.2 Who I am

Highly Sensitive

I am not just sensitized due to trauma and due to my illness, but I am also sensitive by nature. I am risk adverse, by my very nature. I spend a lot of time and effort trying to understand all the factors and consequences of a perceived mistake. I try to prepare for the loss of everything and am religious about making backups of my files.

I spent a whole year getting ready for disaster survival, even though few disasters have or even would likely happen, where I live.

I take it personally, when I am rejected or exploited. I am more sensitive to physical pain and social problems. I like calm and organized places like libraries and movie theaters. I do poorly under pressure and am very sensitive to negative feedback. I find the Internet hard to navigate as I am overstimulated, I have too many options, and everyone is so negative and rude.

Honesty

I think that honesty with ourselves and with others we work with is a good start in dealing with stress and trauma. I have found that despite people's lack of education about mental illness and the perpetuation in the media, that we are serial killers and terrorists, that most people are open to the idea of my having mental illness. They don't know much about it and don't seem to hold any stereotypical views about it.

Many people are also very interested, in what it is like, to have a mental illness. Some people, after seeing and talking to me, think that I was too smart and that is there is some connection between insanity and brilliance. That is not true, in any sense, but it is a better stereotype than thinking I am violent. Some people also talk about famous people, who supposedly have mental illnesses, although these people generally have clinical depression or are bipolar (manic depression), which are much less disabling.

Uniquely Me

One of the things, that makes me so unusual, is that I take my medicine regularly and didn't have any trouble accepting my illness. I also am highly motivated and can understand abstract thought and very subtle ideas. None of this is supposed to be possible. I think that it is a miracle.

The reason why I have been able to write so many useful books about philosophy is just like how God chose a shepherd to be king of Israel, Moses was a person with a speech impediment, and Sarah was elderly when she had a baby – I have this ability because it gives credit to God and not to myself or my training. The reason why I accepted my illness, at first, was that I knew something was wrong with me and then I asked, if it was going to get worse, and I was told that it wouldn't. Only in this last year, when I read about some of the other symptoms of Schizophrenia, was I depressed about what I had lost.

One of the things that helps me most is a good night's sleep. That is the most important thing I can do, to stay positive and motivated. I also produce better work, when I have enough rest.

7.3.3 Building Relationships

I am the kind of person, who wants deep and intimate (emotionally) relationships, with a couple people. When I am in groups, I have learned to say little, so that I do not say anything controversial and end up alienating others. But, since I did not feel relaxed, in these situations, I have a hard time feeling part of the group. Often I am so uncomfortable in these situations, that I end up not going at all.

Equal Relationships

I am looking for equal relationships. One of the ways, to have equal relationships, is to have an equal amount of time talking about yourself, as they do talking about themselves. It is good to be concerned about the other person, but it is not always appropriate to respond, by giving advice, on how to solve the problems they face. Don't ever assume that their situation is like yours.

It is important to think about what the other person is saying and adjust your responses accordingly. And when you ask, for the other person to open up to you, you must sincerely want them to, or it will alienate you. It is important, to get emotionally involved and empathize,

with the other person. But most importantly, you must stop trying to use specific formulas, because they can be transparent.

Deepening Relationships

When someone offers help, if you do not agree the first time, they likely will never ask again. Another important factor is that for the relationship to be equal, you must offer a roughly equivalent amount of help, to the other person, in the relationship. When accepting help, make sure that it is something, that the other person is able to do easily, and that you really would be helped by their contribution.

You need to know what to do, at the right time, to ask for something, or reveal more about yourself. The right time will be when the other person is in that place too. Feel out how much they are willing to get involved and allow them to make the decision, without pressure. But you must continue to be honest, straightforward, and direct. Temper this with your friend's point of view and emotional state.

Often asking for input about situations, that you thought went bad, is often a good way to get a more balanced view, on whether you need to improve, as we tend to over personalize other's reactions to us. Giving and receiving must be balanced, in a healthy and equal relationship.

Rejection

When someone rejects you, there are generally four major reasons for the rejection. One of the reasons for rejection is when the other person sees every relationship as a part of climbing the social ladder. Sometimes asking for a relationship with another, in this situation can be considered weak and therefore they are repulsed, by your offer. In some groups, this is the general tone or culture of the group. Try making relationships elsewhere.

Another reason, for why you may be rejected, is that the other person is using a coping skill, for dealing with

being under valued. You may get a response that is part of minimizing, blaming, or noncompeting. Let go of trying to respond directly, to the accusations, but understand why the other person feel this way. The best response is to acknowledge the other other person's feelings as normal and empathize with them.

Add that you want to pursue a relationship, with the other person, and admire one of their great qualities. Talk about this situation, in the context of the whole length of your relationship, with them. Keep avoiding blaming either one of you, but keep acknowledging the frustrations, of the other and agree with them.

Some people have a hard time building relationships and are afraid to take the risk, because they think they will always be rejected. There is no way to get them to open up to you, but you can express your concern for them.

Some people will constantly respond to your attempts to form a relationship, by starting an argument. The other person sounds very emotional, but loud and intense, or the other response is that the other person starts a debate and never lets you respond.

If you will never see the person again, then just ignore them. Otherwise, you can try to deal with the other's emotional trauma by refusing to argue, refusing to agree something negative about yourself, by not allowing the other person to blame you, by trying to reduce the other person's shame, and by talking it over the next time you see them.

Avoid Simple Formulas

Make sure you are genuine and honest. You can build on what you have read, but without really caring and acting natural, you will be obviously superficial. The worst thing to do is have some predictable way of responding to people, so it is better to be clumsy and shy than to overemphasize what you have read.

Like no theory explains things for everyone, so must even the best advice must be filtered, through our experiences, and we should not put all our faith, in the latest books we read. People do not like being treated, like some

kind of experiment and will respond very negatively, if you seem too predictable.

7.4 Artistic Freedom

7.4.1 Emotions

Controlling Emotions

I wanted to say something about emotions. I believe that emotions are important and useful, but they can also easily spiral out of control. Some people recommend meditation, tai chi, yoga, guided relaxation, and those kind of things. While many of these things can be useful, to certain people, in certain occasions, it isn't for me.

The big reason why is that it is too difficult and complex for me. Something I can do and look forward to doing more often is to take recreational breaks every so often and to walk a good ways each day. I am starting to like playing simple games, drawing sketches, listening to music, and seeing pictures of maps, art, and scenery on my iPad.

Religion and Emotions

I have some incredibly strong emotions, in my relationship with God. I said recently, that reading a whole chapter of scripture was scary to me, because it felt like I was going to burn up, due to the intensity of God, that I could gather from reading the Bible. Sometimes, when I am swept up in emotions, I think that having no free will, or that not doing anything for myself would make me closer to God.

I have enjoyed Pentecostal/Charismatic churches in the past, because they are one of the few churches, that don't teach you to suppress and dominate your emotions, with your intellect. It is good to be rational and have a good grasp, of the mortal world, in which we live, but I think it is dangerous, to ignore what we think our emotions are telling us.

Faith is a belief in something that you cannot prove and Paul called Christ's death on the cross the foolishness of God, that is greater than man's knowledge. Like it or not, we have a number of parts of us, that need to take control or give up control, much like instruments start and stop, at various points, in the symphony. The key point to remember is that God is the conductor.

7.4.2 New Developments

My Life

One of the things that makes me very grateful and gives me much peace is that God helped me write 50 books. It is inspired by the Holy Spirit as my muse, but I will take credit for the mistakes. I finally feel like I can relax and just enjoy life. My situation is difficult, for a number of reasons. Some of the major ones I just wrote about and the vast majority of people will never have to deal with it. On the other hand, I have some unique assets, that other people would kill for: I have no debt, I can't lose my source of income, and I have plenty of money for what I want to do.

I also live in the best place on earth and my apartment is the best in the town and is close enough, so I can walk to the bus station. My place is also beautiful and a gated community and my landlords are really nice and helpful. It seemed that there were people out cleaning and keeping things up, all summer and they really seem to care about the place. I have my own clothes washer and dryer, that came with the apartment, I am renting an air conditioner, that they set up, my house is very well insulated and the sound doesn't penetrate. I can get up whenever I want to, I can eat whatever I want to, I can spend my money anyway I want to.

The Fall

I am excited that it the fall season has just arrived and I can already imagine the holidays. My sister lives in the same city as me and my parent only live about 45 min-

utes north of me. My sister just got her own house and so we will likely celebrate, at least one of the holidays there. All of us have put in a tremendous amount of work into improving our lives and it has really paid off for all of us. We also use our creative abilities in unusual ways, that make us happy and help others.

I love the fall, because it starts getting cool, cloudy, and rainy again this time of year. I do badly in the heat and I also have sensitive eyes, so summers can be rough on me. Summers are often downers for me, because hardly anything is going on. If I walk by the local University, in the summer and on a Sunday, the streets are deserted. I like the fall, as it is like a new beginning, because this is when school starts again. A lot of my best memories happened in the rain and the cold and on cloudy days. A lot of those are memories from high school, when I was on an event for cross country or speech.

7.4.3 Sources of Strength

Parent's Influence

The biggest factors in my resilience and ability to overcome the odds stacked against me in the combination of my personality, my traumas, and my mental illness are prayer and family support. One of the biggest reasons why people are not well adjusted, confident, and content with their lives is that they experienced profound traumas, in their formative years.

The way you raise a child makes the most difference, in what a young adult has to draw from, when encountering obstacles and tragedies, that arise due to conditions we mostly have no control over. When you can build your sense of self on a good foundation, it makes emotional recovery much easier and more successful.

Divine Intervention

Not only has having a good relationship with my family and being raised in a supportive and healthy environment been a key to my success, but the divine intervention of

the Christian God has made all the difference. No matter how damaged you are, due to living through difficult circumstances, God can always transform you into a better person, if you are willing to make the effort. Real spiritual and emotional growth does not come quickly or easily.

God works on a different time frame and in a complex series of events, that we cannot discern. The most important thing that God gives those who are willing to ask is grace. And it is His grace that gives purpose and value, to any circumstance you are in, for whatever reason. This grace is what makes life worth living and gives purpose to our lives.

Personality Traits

The final major influence has been my inheritance of certain personality traits of my parents, like stubbornness and curiosity. As I said before, all character traits have dual aspects. No matter how bad people assume a personality trait is, there is always an equally great positive aspect, to every one.

Stubbornness is often thought to cause people to not ask for help, but, if you have the grace to use it in a useful way, it can be a great source of strength and motivation, to do what is right, even when others don't understand or appreciate the importance, of what you know in your heart is right. Curiosity has sometimes led me to study things that only led to dark and depressing thoughts, but everything I have learned has made me a better person and helped me understand how the world works, how I can change it, and how to get along well with others, who don't share my values.

My Understanding of God

One of the things that makes me so different is the things I am sure of and those I am unsure of. Sometimes I have no doubt about a certain direction I should take or insights into why things happen the way they do. Other times I doubt everything. The most important thing I just

intuitively know is that the God of the Bible is the real God.

I know from nature, from experience, and from intuition that the universe was created by an eternal, all-powerful, and perfectly good God. I know that His personality is the same as the one described in the Christian Bible. And the Bible continues to amaze me, with how well it explains why the world works the way it does, or why I experience life the way I do. I always feel there is so much more that I could understand, when God would choose to reveal it to me. The God of the Bible is beyond everything I could hope for or imagine.

Chapter 8

Final Insights

by Ben Huot

8.1 Too Literal

8.1.1 Background

Why so Different?

One of the things, that has continued to perplex me, throughout my life, is the explanation of why I am so different, than everyone else. Part of it, I now know, is due to my mental illness, service in the military, and level of intelligence. But those factors are not enough, to explain my perspective, on the world. One of the ways, in which I am different, than most other people is that I know things, that no one else seems to understand, and things everyone seems to understand, I have immense difficulty in wrapping my minds around.

What Being Literal Means

One of the things, that my parents keep on repeating, is that I am very literal. I just recently have realized what they meant by this. I know my parents would have explained it, if I had asked, but I just didn't think to and they thought I knew what they meant. This literal interpretation, of everything, has had more impact on my relationships, than any other factor has. It is hard, to explain, what being literal is, but I think it is related to my binary view of the world. This is similar to what people often differentiate different views of ethics being either black and white or shades of grey. But I am using this analogy, in terms of broader thinking, than just ethics.

Rationale

I think this comes, from my aversion, to thinking of myself, as being arrogant. I like to make things simple enough, so they can be understood, by the average person. I really despise elitism. I am on the side of the poor, the discriminated against, and the powerless. This is probably because I thought of myself, as being under the same situation, at one time. None one was there to help me, so I

want to be there to help others, so they don't have to go through it alone, too.

8.1.2 How it Works

Effects

Because of this combination, of both wanting to be intellectual and being a man of the people, at the same time, I ended up, with a bizarre combination of: precise, thorough, rigid, consistent, logical, simplistic, and extreme patterns of thinking. I have tried, to find a way, to be smart and still be populist and see others, in the same way. This combination is probably rare, except for: revolutionaries, prophets, serial killers, and cult leaders. I think I will end up better, because of my willingness to follow rules and my aversion to physical pain and isolation.

Examples of Being too Literal

When people asked me to do something with them, after I had first met them, in a number of cases, it didn't work out for me, so they didn't ask again. I took the invitation literally, but they meant to show an interest in me, so that when they didn't ask me again, it wasn't because they didn't like me – it was because they thought I had rejected them.

Just like I feel pressured into doing things, so that when I run into someone and they ask what I am doing, that I have things to share. I then get so busy trying to do things, that I end up not seeing them again. But, I realize now, that they didn't expect me, to do anything, and I actually was doing way more, than they were anyway.

When I talk to someone about something academic and they don't tell me, that they don't understand, I think that they do understand, but they likely feel the need, to hide their lack of understanding, because they think I will take it as a sign of weakness in them. I think many people I run into think I am elitist or have high expectations of everyone, because of my degree of motivation to learn.

How Others Perceive This

This inability, to see things symbolically, is something, that most people do not have a problem with, so many times people might have thought because I was so smart, but appeared unable, to grasp the most basic things, they thought of me as an idiot savant (someone who is very good at one thing, but can do little else). The other things that people used to explain this was to think I was crazy or messing with them.

8.2 My Motivation

8.2.1 The Military Factor

My Pain is Not that Great

One of the things, that people have a hard time understanding, about me, is my immense motivation, to pursue interests that are: extremely demanding emotionally, take up a huge amount of time, and make me no money. I think the motivation comes, from the perspective I have had, when in the military. I know, that as difficult as things are for me, they are much harder, than that, for most people, in the world today. I also had experiences, in doing things, in the military, that are much more scary, than anything, in causing me physical pain.

Damage to Self Esteem

Many things, in the military, that I was very afraid of, I had to do anyway and I was treated like I was of no more value, than a piece of meat, at the same time. The drill sergeant of my platoon treated us like we were worthless, for our entire Basic Training. One of the things, that made things even harder was my lack of sleep, during Basic Training and Advanced Training, in the military. I got, at the most, 7 hours of sleep a night, during Basic Training, and then, during the first month or two of my Advanced Training, I only got 3 hours of sleep, at night.

No Control Over Anything

I have always needed, at least 12 hours of sleep, to feel rested. When I was in the military, I never felt safe. I felt, that I was constantly being evaluated and could have anything demanded of me, at any time. I had no power, over anything, in my life. At the same time, I knew that, as tough as the training was on me, that during a war conditions could cause a exponentially greater amount of pain. The only possible way, to get out of something, the NCOs tell you to do is by your own death.

8.2.2 Making Sense of It All

Causes and My Response

This tremendous amount of stress, combined with my genetic predisposition to mental illness, and my very sensitive personality are what caused me to get diagnosed with Paranoid Schizophrenia. My mom has always thought, that, one of the reason why I was able to do so well, was that shortly after getting out of the hospital, I began again reading philosophy and my decision, to not just give up, was the catalyst. My not giving up comes from my inability to comprehend what giving up means or how to do it.

Why This Had to Happen

My immense motivation has caused me unnecessary pain, but it is likely the reason why I was able, to understand these insights, these last few years. Maybe I needed to work very hard, to understand how to not push myself so hard. Just like I said, that people are not emotionally ready to accept, that we are going to go back to the stone age, technologically, so I think that I may of not been emotionally ready, to accept, that pushing myself less, was not giving up. I guess that my biggest fear is that, if I take a break, that I will never be able, to motivate myself, to go back, to work, on what I find important.

Problem of Suffering

Being a Christian gives me a sense of purpose, to much of the things, that were very hard, for me, to go through, but the idea that God is perfectly good and cares about you is very difficult, to understand, when you have to go through things, very few others have to. One of the things, that really bothered me, throughout my life, is that I didn't understand some of the things, that I have learned recently and I thought, that if I knew about these issues earlier in my life, then I could have made my life better.

Sometimes Ignorance is Helpful

But, I have also realized, that God might give us ignorance, in parts of our life, when knowing these things, about our lives, would not make them better, because we either could not change those things, about ourselves, even if we knew about them, or that not understanding those things actually made us able, to do things, we would not have been able to do, otherwise. Sometimes, your ignorance can be an advantage, to you in, certain situations.

Difficulty of Explaining Suffering

The way things happen, in our lives, little makes sense of most of it, but that is likely because our brains can't handle the complex web, of causality, that God works through. And maybe there is no real good answer to why God allows us to suffer, that would be sufficient for us. Maybe the death of Jesus Christ on the cross is the best explanation of why God allows us to suffer – He, at least, was willing to Himself.

Beyond Our Suffering

The other things that I don't think people realize are: the amount of control God gives, to people, to affect our world good and bad, how much God holds back, from what should happen, as a result of our poor choices, and exactly how devastating sin was, to God's creation. God actually set up things perfectly for us, by both giving us free will,

but, at the same time, not understanding what evil was, so we could have a rational world, have freedom of choice, and the impossibility of doing evil. I guess that explain why we just can't seem to live by even simple rules. I do know that pain, in any form, is a powerful motivating factor and greater pain generally motivates us more.

8.3 Big Changes

8.3.1 Kinds of Change

Change Causes Stress

Making big changes, for me, usually ends up, in failure, because the rapid change gives me both depression, over what I have given up, and anxiety about having, to commit, to something long-term. Instead of getting less stress, by taking on a new simpler and easier pursuit, I just remove the thing, that gave me purpose and joy. The most stressful thing, to me, is not the stress of dealing with the difficulty in what I have chosen, but starting new, unrelated things. And when I want to make a change, I can do so, only if I have no pressure, to achieve something, or feel like I am under a timeline. The most successful things I have done I did little bits, at a time.

Incremental Change

When I started writing poetry back in 1998, I didn't plan on writing even one book let alone 52. But, I just kept writing and learning about technology, then I had enough material, I tried putting it together, in bigger chunks, learned LaTeX, and just tried making nice PDFs. When I was able to do that, then I entertained the possibility of writing books. When I tried to write an entire book in a month, I got stressed out, but when I put together my collections and added a chapter, at a time, to one book, I had much less stress.

8.3.2 Avoiding Stress

No Commitments

I have learned not, to make any long term commitments, like signing up for: college classes, volunteer work, social clubs, or even gym memberships. When I have a certain time, that I have to be, at a certain place, on a reoccurring basis, it stress me out and it triggers depression and paranoia. I obsess about having to keep doing the things over a long period of time and have trouble taking it one day at a time.

Having No Plans

That is why I don't plan out any books or website changes, or keep lists of things to do. I also find most activities much more intense, than other people do. I do better, in controlled settings, like a movie theatre or a library. But, I have the freedom, to not have, to commit, to anything and trading one set of stress for another would not be an improvement.

8.4 New Projects

8.4.1 Rationale

Reaching the Logical End

As I have finished studying virtually everything, that interests me, in the humanities, I have come to a logical end, to my studies. This doesn't mean that I won't write, but maybe on different topics, or at least with the addition of subjects to my usual mix.

Consistency with My Worldview

As I like to think of myself as a "man of the people," I have decided to start learning some things about sports and entertainment. I expect it to take some time, but there are people who follow sports and entertainment that

could never understand anything as complicated and subtle as philosophy.

8.4.2 Goals

Good Results

Instead of giving up everything else, that I enjoy doing now, I have decided, to just move, in this new direction, when I feel like it. I might also be able, to both gather enough material and get inspiration, to write a new book, on these new subjects. The two best outcomes would be making it easier to find people with common interests and because I am just very tired, of all the effort involved, in having, to think so deeply and so much.

Making Life Easier

I think, that my interest, in the humanities has made my life more difficult, than it needs, to be. I just need, to remember not to over research it, so that I don't bring the negative aspects, of more academic pursuits. After all, studying and memorizing about the history and statistics of sports, or the addresses and trivia of all the celebrities is kind of missing the point of watching a game or a show.